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MY BROTHER

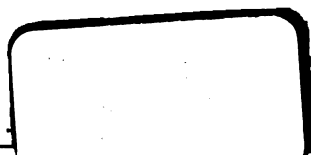
THE MAN OF MANY FRIENDS

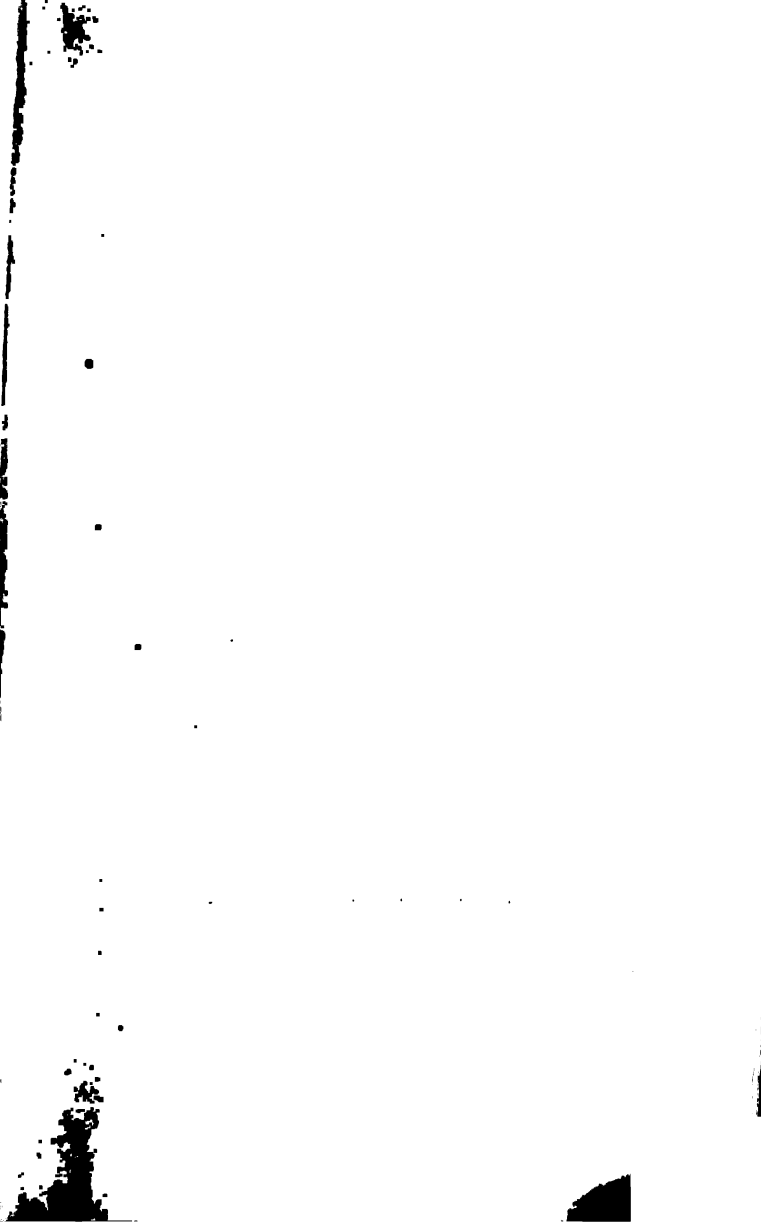


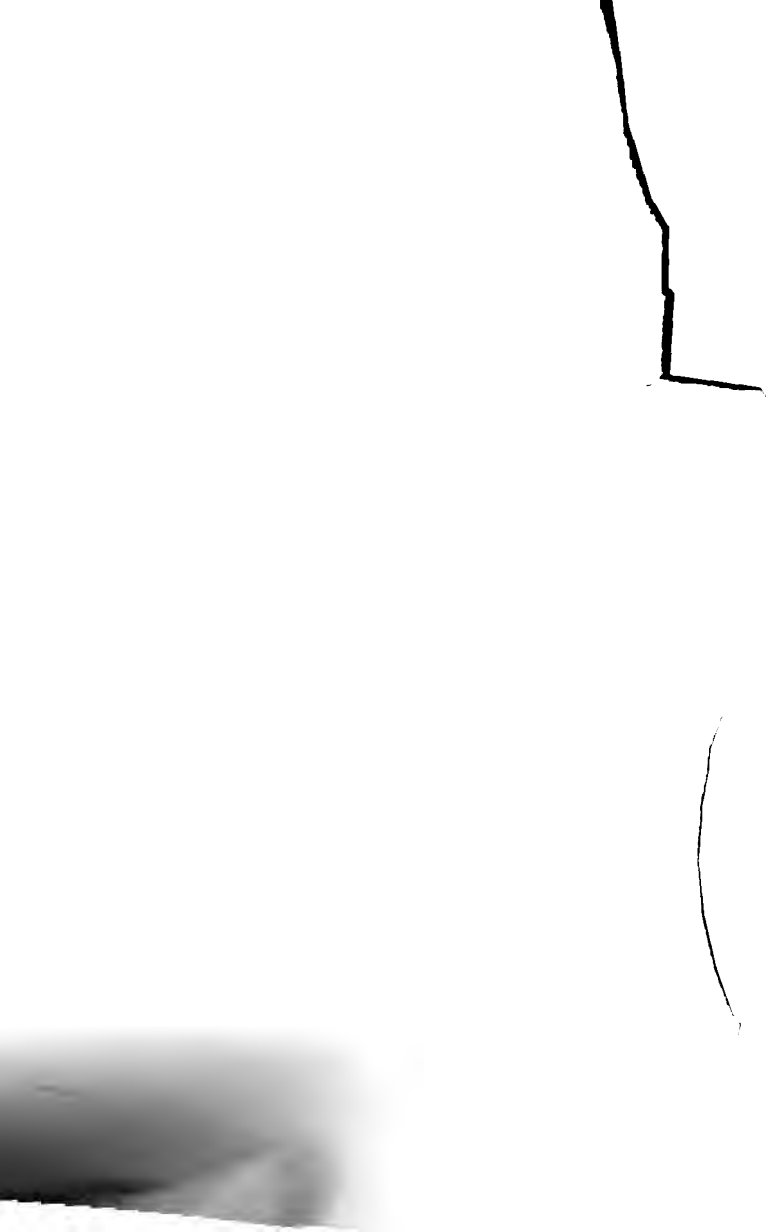
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THE MAN OF MANY FRIENDS.

G. C. M. Shank del.

T. Williams Sculp.

MY BROTHER,

OR,

THE MAN OF MANY FRIENDS.

By AN OLD AUTHOR.

My



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PREFACE.

HE who would attempt to improve the pleasures of his fellow beings, has a difficult and daring task ; and yet, if by the same means their pleasures *can* be improved, and their sorrows alleviated, the task is surely one well worthy of enterprising efforts on the part of the philanthropist.

The writer of this little story once heard a gentleman of the turf comforting an old Bath coachman on the subject of railways, by assuring him that his mode of travelling would never be superseded ; because gentlemen who understood the real pleasure of it, would never give it up. But the old coachman shook his head. He was wiser than the gentleman ; and he knew that his occupation would soon be gone. He knew it for this reason : that notwithstanding all the enjoyments of the old mode of transit, there were pleasures connected with the new, of a widely different nature, but far more in accordance with the advancing civilisation of the age.

Wherever the question assumes the aspect of practical utility, the office of the innovator, who would facilitate the transaction of business, becomes less difficult. It is where

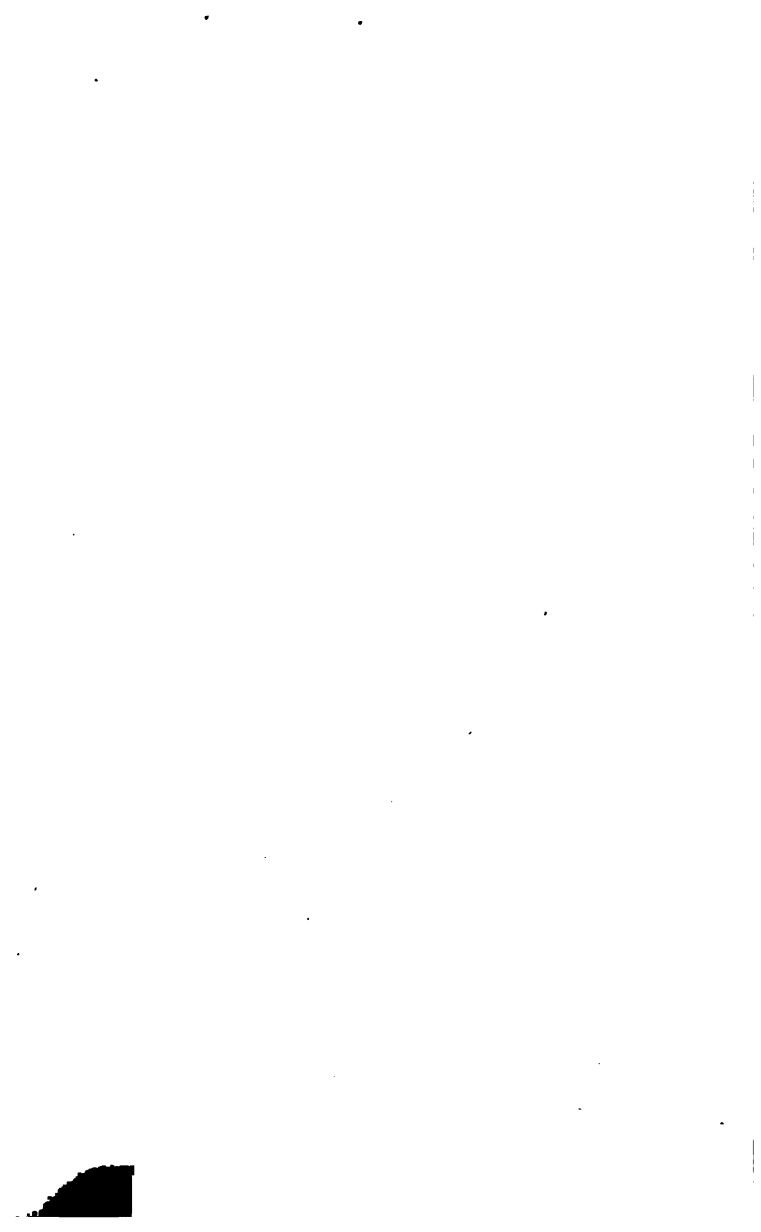
moral utility, or the advancement of social happiness and welfare is attempted, that the disposition to oppose and resist is most powerfully manifested.

People do not like to be dictated to in their pleasures ; it is not natural that they should. And yet our domestic and social welfare, as well as our national prosperity, depend more in reality upon what we enjoy—upon what we hold up as the standard of enjoyment,—than upon the business we transact, or the commerce we pursue. Hence the gradual elevation of our enjoyments, the raising of our estimate of pleasure in general, becomes an essential and important part of that advancing civilisation, which is our pride and glory. For it would be of little service to us as a people, that our business-transactions should be conducted with the speed of lightning, if in our moments of social enjoyment we remained satisfied with the old practice of grinning through collars, and racing in sacks.

The great difficulty, however, in the substitution of the new pleasure for the old—the high pleasure for the low, lies in association. What we have enjoyed once, especially in early life, amidst all the loving and the tender connections of the home circle, or in the society of friends long separated, it may be, or still nearer and dearer to us than any other companionship on earth;—what we have thus enjoyed it seems nothing less than absolute cruelty to dismiss as no longer suited to our altered tastes, or worthy of our exalted preference.

In some way or other, however, this great business of elevating our pleasures must be done ; or neither enemies subdued, nor territories gained;—neither the wonders of

scientific discovery, nor mechanical invention, can serve the real purposes of national and social progress. There may be victories abroad, with chains upon the people at home;—glory in the open field, and shame beneath the private roof. The time has come when England especially has a great moral work to begin, in order that her internal prosperity may keep pace with the external dignity and power;—in order that her people may be as good as they are brave. As the meanest soldier in her armies deserves in reality the gratitude of his countrymen, as much as the officer who returns to rank and honour; because without those undistinguished items, her battles could not be fought—her victories could not be gained; so the humblest efforts in the field of moral conflict may not eventually be without their value in accomplishing a victory of far higher importance than ever was obtained at the cost of human life.



HAPPY CHRISTMAS.

HAPPY CHRISTMAS! There are so many different methods of making this day happy, and so strong a predisposition to find and feel it so, that almost without a method or a plan, the very day itself seems to bring its own enjoyment. It is especially a day on which hearts are opened, and this, after all, is the true secret of happiness. It is a day on which kindness, love, and pity find for themselves channels which may possibly have been closed for the whole previous year. But we have one day to speak of, not all;—we have details, not generalities, to deal with.

Happy Christmas! This day, in particular, was frosty and bright,—the air clear and sharp, as the figure of a lady, comfortably wrapped in thick fur, tripped lightly along the frosty footpath; for though her feet were protected by snow boots, her step was that of one who goes easily, because joyfully, towards some pleasant place of shelter and of happiness. Her face was perhaps not the most beautiful in the world, as regards feature and complexion; but its expression was so earnest, and yet so full of enjoyment,—so grave and yet so glowing, that you might have been sure the lady who tripped thus pleasantly along, was one in whose society it would be delightful to sit beside the winter's fire.

And yet this lady was a governess!—a governess, and at the same time an honoured guest in a house of no mean standing amongst the many mansions and villas which formed the fashionable suburb of a large and prosperous town. She was going to join in the festivities of the day, with friends who cared no more whether she was or was not a governess—only for her own sake—than they did by which door she entered, or what dress she wore. She knew this;

and although when she stopped from her brisk walk, it was at the entrance of a noble looking mansion, and though a very stately footman answered her frank hearty knock, she ran up stairs with as little doubt about her welcome, as if she had borne the highest title amongst the magnates of the neighbourhood. The shouts of joy which hailed her arrival sufficiently attested that to the juvenile community within her presence was welcome indeed. Throughout that house the day was one of perfect liberty. The children of the family, eight in number, might, for that day, do exactly as they liked; only their mother accustomed them to review the day on the following morning; and thus inquire kindly, but seriously, whether they thought the day had been altogether as happy as it was possible to make it; and if not, how they might render Christmas-day another year more pleasant to all.

Nor were the children themselves at all slow to take advantage of the often-envied privilege of doing as they liked; for no sooner had the lady already spoken of, entered the room, than they began to cling around her in every variety of embrace, from the infant arms which could only reach wide enough to clasp her dress, to the stout hug of a burly fellow of six years old;—from the soft embrace, and the modest salute of the oldest in the group—a young lady of thirteen—to the rampant struggles of babyhood, intent upon escaping from the arms of the nurse to those of the newly arrived guest.

Breathless with all this boisterous ebullition of joy, and almost torn in pieces by contending claims which it was impossible all at once to satisfy, the lady sunk at last into a chair, laughing at the dishevelled condition of her hair, the crushing of her best bonnet, as she declared it to be, and the general derangement of the somewhat snug and prim costume, in which she had arrayed herself with more pains than usual for that especial occasion.

Much as they enjoyed the privilege of doing as they liked, however, the children of this household still made rules for themselves and for others, which they were somewhat pertinacious in carrying out. One was that every one should have a title, or nickname given for the day, and this lady was to be called Brenda, a fact which was announced to her with all due formality. Another rule was, that any

one detected in the act of looking grave, and abstracted, but especially if looking melancholy, should be compelled to tell a story for the amusement of the company. So Brenda, a somewhat grave and thoughtful-looking woman, knew what she had to expect, if any of the children could surprise her while gazing into the fire, as her familiar custom was, with her eyes fixed upon some glowing piece of coal, while her thoughts went wandering away; away, it might be, over half the globe. Nobody knew exactly where they went; only every one intimately acquainted with her knew that she had this habit, and that when her eyes were thus fixed, she had neither sight, nor hearing, nor senses of any kind for what was going on around her.

Brenda was in great danger to-day; for the very act of walking fast in the cold, has the effect of making a fixed and steady gaze into a glowing fire, exactly the most agreeable thing to be done; but the children, as if determined that their guest should not begin thus to lose her sense of their presence, proposed that, until the heads of the family made their appearance, or other guests arrived, the time should be occupied in romping; downright hearty romping.

Brenda agreed to the proposal, and soon found herself by some unlucky accident, seated on the floor, to the no small delight of her young companions: while her hair, having been caught by the buttons of a little jacket, burst from its confinement, and fell around her shoulders. This was a delicious moment to the young people, and they jumped and danced around her in all the exultation of a grand triumph, each doing something, though still gently and by stealth, to make the disaster more complete; when suddenly the door opened, and a manly voice was heard exclaiming, "Well done; upon my word! I wonder what next?" Up started Brenda to her feet in a moment. The children shrieked with delight. It was Uncle Talbot, the person in all the world they would have chosen to come in just then; for they knew that Brenda would blush so, and be in such a delightful state of confusion.

We have said the lady was not beautiful, but her hair was, and that is something. They were kind eyes that looked upon it too, and that is more, though it is quite

possible they might never, until that moment, have noticed the fact of the beautiful hair. But they could not avoid it now, as the lady stood laughing, and blushing, and wreathing it round her head; while the soft silken tresses would escape from her fingers, one on this side, and another on that, until the gentleman was compelled, in sheer compassion, to offer his assistance; but the oldest daughter, the young lady of the family, thought this so improper, that she rushed to the rescue of her friend, and, after a good many failures, at last made all sufficiently secure for Brenda to escape with perfect propriety to the young lady's room, where the braids of her hair were soon made close and snug as usual.

When the dinner hour arrived, there were other guests, and, of course, no romping; but still, none whose presence operated upon the children's happiness with any restraint in the slightest degree irksome. We pretend not to describe the table, or its rich profusion. Christmas dinners are generally very much alike, but there was one feature in this of so marked a character, that it may be worth pointing out—*there was no wine*; and yet there was no want of sociability, nor even of merriment. The guests at that table were chiefly of one way of thinking on this point; and the host and hostess made amends for the one deficiency by the best selected viands, and the most splendid dessert with which it was possible for their table to be supplied. In every other respect their tastes were indulged to the extreme of liberality. In fact, they were but human, and, it must be confessed, had a little weakness on the indulgent side. Thus, while self-denying in one respect, they endeavoured to make up to their friends for their peculiar and unaccustomed deficiency in the entertainment, by every luxury in the way of taste and refinement which could be carried out consistently with the exercise of an almost unbounded charity towards the poor and the suffering around them. All who have made the experiment, however, know well how much is gained in the way both of economy and of self-indulgence, by the absence from their tables of the one expensive luxury which was never seen on this. Thus, they found that the most beautiful gardens, with a splendid conservatory, forming a sort of appendage to the drawing-room, could be maintained with less outlay than is required

for the maintenance of what is called a good cellar; and this family preferred very much that their enjoyments should be above ground. They had consequently both fruits and flowers of the most esteemed and the rarest kinds; and of these they were as profuse in their distribution amongst their friends, as they were studious to make them always accessible at home.

But the family had, beyond this, another way of making up for the want of wine; they conversed well and fluently. They had amongst themselves an unusual amount of information, and in many instances a freshness and originality of thought, which gave piquancy to whatever was talked about. Painting, sculpture, and many other branches of the fine arts, formed no inconsiderable portion of their own enjoyment, and contributed largely, in addition to an excellent library, to that of their friends. But beyond all these, the guest in this family was sure to meet with ever-ready sympathy, both for rich and poor, for high and low; sympathy which of itself, wherever it is found, supplies a deeper and a truer indulgence than ever was derived from the gratification of a mere appetite. Here, too, was the patient ear to listen to long stories about self; the delicately-folded cloak for the ill-judging or the ill-informed; the kind compliance with the whim of the requiring; the forbearance for vanity, but at the same time, when necessary, the soft rebuke, so couched in tenderness as to be more felt than when severe. These, with that charity which hopeth all things, imported such a tone to the manners, conversation, and general habits of this family, that most of the guests who visited them without any previous knowledge of their one peculiarity, declared after leaving the house, that they should never have been aware of the absence of wine at the table, but for some difference in the appearance of the dessert, and certainly had felt no want of it.

Of course their acquaintance in general said it was a great pity that such agreeable and good people should choose to be eccentric in such a point. Others thought it extremely bad taste; and others, perhaps a little piqued, pronounced it something worse than bad taste to adopt any rule of conduct calculated to cast unfavourable reflections upon their neighbours; nor were there wanting some who, not knowing the family well, went still further, and said they were wrong,

very wrong, thus to weaken their influence, and hinder the good they might otherwise do.

But it would be as endless a task, as without utility, to attempt to sum up the *spoken* evidence against this one peculiarity in the habits of a family otherwise almost unexceptionable in character. They might be sometimes pained when a friend or a near relative took up this language against them; but they had their own enjoyments, notwithstanding, and their more than abundant reward. They had besides so great and good a motive for adopting this peculiarity, and they drew around them so large a society of enlightened friends who agreed with them in the weight and sufficiency of this motive, that they managed to entertain as many happy parties beneath their always hospitable roof, as their time—always valuable to them—could possibly allow.

Such was especially the case on Christmas-day; and as we have already seen that they could receive a simple governess, not only as one of their dearest friends, but as one of their most honoured guests, so we may suppose that the company met that evening around their cheerful hearth, brought with them, as their highest recommendation, kindness of heart, and intellectual refinement, rather than startling titles, splendid equipages, or costly gems.

On this evening the conservatory was lighted up, but it was so embowered in the thick foliage of luxuriant exotic plants, that there were shady nooks to be found in it, almost as retired and hidden as those in the shrubbery without; and in one of these there happened, in the course of the evening, to be two figures concealed from the full view of the guests in the drawing-room by a dark orange-tree and a camellia in full bloom.

"Brenda!—we have lost Brenda, and Uncle Talbot too," had been the cry of the children for the last half-hour, when a little girl on tiptoe came and whispered to her brother, that she believed herself to be in possession of the secret of their hiding-place—"but don't say a word." "No, we won't say a word," was the whispered charge and response of the little party, as they crept along a shaded part of the conservatory, each with a rosy finger lifted up in token of thorough distrust of the power of the others to keep silence. At last they came to a peeping-place, from whence they

could see the two figures; and had not the lady and gentleman been absorbed in some subject of thought, or conversation profoundly interesting, most assuredly they must have heard the suppressed titters of the juvenile group, as they alternately plucked one another back, and then stretched forward themselves in order to obtain fuller evidence, that Brenda had incurred all the liability of being compelled to tell a story for the amusement of the company. Indeed, as they were too far off to peep under her eyelashes, and to see the sparkle of her eyes, they might well mistake her attitude, with bent head and look fixed on the ground, for that of deep thought,—if not of absolute dejection. And Uncle Talbot too was neither laughing nor making fun, but standing leaning against a pillar, with a white camellia in his hand, from which he was actually stripping off the petals one by one. They did believe Uncle Talbot would have to tell a story too.

At last the children could bear it no longer. Their evidence was strong enough; and, springing forward, they seized the startled lady in their arms, exclaiming, "Caught! caught! You will have to tell a story at least half an hour long; and Uncle Talbot is nearly as bad."

It must be confessed that both lady and gentleman looked exceedingly ill-prepared to tell a story for the benefit of any one but each other. The children, however, insisted. It was the law of the family: they were rulers for that evening, and they must be obeyed.

"Poor Brenda!" said the little girl who had first discovered her friend. "Poor Brenda!" she whispered to her brother. "Don't tease her. I think she is going to cry."

"Nonsense!" exclaimed the boy, in no degree melted. "Brenda never cries; and she is the best story-teller here."

But Uncle Talbot now began to interfere, and the children always became submissive on the instant when he spoke gravely. "Remember, my dear fellow," said he to the boy, "there is no real fun—no good, noble fun, that gives a moment's pain to any one. I really do not think that Brenda can tell a story to-night."

The submissive and disappointed voices of the children had more effect upon the lady than the boisterous assertion of their claims. She rose and turned towards them; and though her eyes looked rather as if she had been weeping,

she smiled very sweetly, as she said, "I will tell you **then** what I will do, if you will excuse me to-night. I will **write** you a story, if you like; and the first Christmas-day **on** which I am not here to enjoy it with you, this story **shall** be read aloud: I ought rather to say, the first New Year's Eve; for you are alone then, and I should not like my story to be read aloud except to your own family."

The children were satisfied—some of them delighted; and as the lady and gentleman were now quite willing to return with them and the rest of the company, they **led** them along through the odorous vista of plants and flowers, clapping their hands and shouting as they went, as if they had obtained a victory rather than suffered a defeat.

The following pages will be devoted to this promised **story**, which, however, was not read by the family until some **of** the children had entered upon life as men and women.

THE
MAN OF MANY FRIENDS;
OR,
MY BROTHER'S FORTUNES.

CHAPTER I.

I DATE my story from the dreamy dusk of a short Christmas afternoon, when a small family party sat around the fire in my father's old parlour. Some of us had become sleepy with gazing at the red-hot wood which smouldered on the fire, others no less so with the plentiful repast partaken of an hour or two later than usual; for my father, who did not make a point of keeping the whole day holy, liked to spin out as much time in his counting-house as the claims of his family would permit. So we dined late on that day, and we usually dined well: we had turkey with all its etceteras, and plum-pudding, of course; and then we—the children—cracked nuts, and drank ginger-wine, and envied nobody.

Still, it must be confessed, there was no great hilarity prevailing amongst us, after all. My mother, constitutionally an invalid, could not bear any noisy games. My father had a silent skill of his own, by which he subdued our mirth. My oldest brother considered all mirth as no better than folly; and thus, in our own household, there was nobody either to make merriment, or to enjoy it, except myself, and my little brother Martyn, who was about three years my junior.

Martyn, however, was a world of merriment in himself, as any one might have known who looked into his bright

hazel eyes, as they peeped up ever and anon from beneath a mass of auburn hair which clustered in heavy waves around his head, giving it not unfrequently, the round contour of a mop; and this, in spite of the thin, white, motherly hand that was so often stretched out to stroke it softly down; while some gentle word of kind encouragement, or equally kind reproof, would be so fondly whispered into his ear, that the whole process reminded me more of the cooing of a dove, than of anything to which human affection has ever assigned a name.

I have no recollection that the thin white hand was ever stretched out over my head exactly in the same way; but I learned not to feel the want of it, and became perfectly satisfied that Martyn had his own full share of the cooing, and perhaps a little more.

To the best of my remembrance, my father never cooed over any one, nor my brother Samuel either. They were very much alike, and as their occupations were the same, so their tastes and tempers chimed in wonderfully together. Samuel, too, was much older than myself, and very grave and demure for his years; so that Martyn and I used to look upon him as a kind of second father; only, I think, we feared him even more than our real parent, just in proportion as he mixed a little, and it was only a very little, more in our pursuits and amusements. We felt no doubt but my father in his youth—if indeed he could be supposed ever to have been young—must have been exactly such a boy to his brothers and sisters as Samuel was to us—tall, erect, thin, and pale almost to whiteness, and going about always with a silent chilling influence, very much like a stealthy shower of snow. I think my brother Samuel's influence had more sharpness and irritation in it than my father's, and perhaps it more resembled the same shower after each particle has been slightly thawed, and then frozen again. Besides this, they were both of unusually large make, as to the frame-work of the men; and somehow or other, seemed always quite to fill our low, old-fashioned rooms whenever they came in, so that Martyn and I sidled off from the fire as they approached, just as I have often observed in the habits of a dog which is accustomed to be trod upon, and then kicked for crying out. My mother, happily for her, had no cause for terror,

because she maintained her accustomed place on a large sofa which stood on one side of the room.

Still it was a most comfortable-looking, oak-panelled parlour, that in which we sat on the Christmas afternoon alluded to. I have seldom seen one that looked altogether more inviting. The carpet was warm-coloured; it looked very warm when my father and Samuel sate upon it. The curtains too were warm, and could be drawn quite across a wide bay-window, which afforded a charming recess for Martyn and me to retire to for a little private fun of our own; until one evening when I unfortunately betrayed our place of concealment by a most unlucky explosion of laughter; after which we were strictly forbidden to hide ourselves in that favourite place again.

Such, then, was our limited household, and such the restraint under which we sate around the fire on that dark, dull, dreamy afternoon; until, after nodding once or twice under the leaden influence which fell upon me that day with more weight than usual, I heard Martyn whispering close beside my ear, "Let us go and plague old Jane."

Old Jane was my mother's confidential servant, who had been in the family longer than I could remember. She exercised a sort of general care over the whole establishment; and, like many other persons who have had too much upon their hands, and yet will not content themselves with less, she was not the mildest in temper, nor the most patient under provocation. Martyn knew this, and he took advantage of it. He knew also that she must bear with him to a certain extent, because my mother would not bear with her unless she did. So the mischievous boy enjoyed many a joke at her expense, deriving infinite amusement from her methods of resistance and revenge, which were sure to die away into a kind of inward grumbling, before she reached the door of her mistress's room.

On this afternoon, in particular, Martyn had provided himself with some kind of explosive missiles, which, though strictly forbidden in the house, he thought he could manage to discharge with success, if only old Jane could be caught emerging from the kitchen door, or otherwise out of hearing of the heads of the family; so we took our stand, Martyn and I, at the entrance of a wood-house, where we hoped Jane would have to go for chips to light the fire in my mother's chamber.

We had a long time to wait, and altogether our enterprise was not very encouraging; for while we stood there, shaking with cold, my mother's fire was already blazing brightly. Besides which, as we looked earnestly towards the kitchen-door, we both perceived, with a strange kind of shivering sensation, that there was the figure of a man creeping stealthily along the causeway which led to the back door, and though we ourselves were in darkness, we were able to see and observe this figure by a glimmering light which issued from one of the windows in that part of the house. Just at the first moment of alarm I felt Martyn give my arm a terrible grasp, not much in keeping with the valour of one who volunteers an adventurous exploit; and I also became sensible that he crept closer to the wall, at the same time that he pushed me before him with a strength and determination worthy of a bolder act.

"It is only some poor beggar," I whispered in my brother's ear.

"I wish we could slip round the other way," said Martyn.

"I don't think there is anything to fear," I observed.

"Let us walk straight into the kitchen. I dare say he's some poor hungry man, and I will ask Jane to give him a piece of bread."

"Oh then," said Martyn, "I can let off my crackers just as she comes out."

"For shame, Martyn," I said; "you would frighten the poor man."

But while we talked—and it was only in whispers that we ventured to do so—we saw, to our astonishment, that the strange man went creeping on with one hand stretched out to feel the wall, until he came to the door, and then laying hold of the latch, he opened it and walked into the house.

"Did you ever see such impudence!" exclaimed Martyn.

We were both bold enough now, and rushed into our father's house as if to rescue the family from some invading foe.

The first thing we saw on entering was the beggar-man, sitting very composedly upon a chair by the kitchen-fire; while Jane, though tossing her head very high, made no attempt to dislodge him from his comfortable quarters.

It struck me then that I had seen the man before, but I could not tell where. To my horror he beckoned me

towards him, and I went passively, not knowing what I did. He then lifted me upon his knee, took hold of my chin, and I dare say gave me a kiss; but the mingled fear and indignation which shook my whole being at that moment, prevented my knowing more than that I experienced an indescribable nausea from the smell of old clothes, tobacco, and something else which I did not then quite understand.

I scrambled away as soon as I was able, and in another moment could have laughed to see the earnest passion depicted in Martyn's little face, as if the honour of our family name had received some indelible stain. Indeed all the time that I remained in my wretched captivity, he had been pounding away at the knees of the poor man, with both his fists doubled, and with all the force he could put into them. Now he had nothing but contempt to express; and, as if leading me away from a conquered enemy, he took hold of my hand, and would have drawn me out of the vile presence.

But the man caught my arm as we were going, and bringing his face very near to mine, said in a kind of half-whisper, "Tell your mother I am here."

"You?" I asked. "Who are you?"

"Uncle Joshua," he replied. "Don't you know Uncle Joshua?" and he was about to kiss me again. But I eluded him this time; and escaping with the hand of my brother clasped closely in my own, we ran as quickly as we could along the passage to the parlour; and then, with a secret consciousness that the whole affair was something not very pleasant, I whispered to my mother that there was a man in the kitchen who called himself Uncle Joshua.

Happily my father had fallen asleep in his arm-chair, and Samuel had left the room. I observed that my mother started almost up from the couch; but the next moment, directing a watchful glance to my father, as if to ascertain that he really was asleep, she grasped some of the many shawls and wrappers in which she was usually enveloped, and desiring me to send Jane, prepared to go up to her own room; not, however, without lifting up her finger with such a look both to Martyn and me, that we perfectly understood we were to be silent as to what we had seen and heard.

I believe curiosity, more than any desire to be of use, induced me to follow, and I heard my brother's feet pattering after me.

"Oh mother!" he exclaimed, as soon as we had reached the chamber, where we used to say very much what we liked—"Oh mother! he is such a horrid old fellow!"

"Hush, my boy!" said my mother in a voice so sad.

"He is," repeated Martyn. "And so filthy," I added.

My mother said no more, but sank into her reclining chair like one struck down by some heavy blow; while we went on in the same style, describing the strange man, with what to her must have been agonising minuteness, his hair—his eyes—his mouth—his clothes—

"Hush, hush!" my children," said my mother, now quite imploringly. She could bear it no longer, and the very tone of her voice compelled us to be silent. Laying one gentle hand upon Martyn's head, she slid the other round his waist, and quietly drew him close beside her. "My children," she said, "that man is really your uncle, and—my brother."

"Oh mother; you don't mean so really," we both exclaimed.

"It is indeed the truth—the sad truth," she went on to say.

"Not yours?" said Martyn, with a tenderness quite unusual to him. "You are so fair—so good—so nice. He cannot be your brother."

"Martyn," said my mother, "we had the same parents. We were born in the same house, and we played together in childhood, as your sister and you do now."

"But what makes him so shaking?" I asked. "Is he a very bad man?"

"I am afraid he is," replied my mother.

"But," said Martyn, for we were all curiosity and astonishment, "other bad men are not like that. There's my father's foreman who was turned away—he was quite clean, and nice, and never looked like that."

"Martyn," said my mother with great earnestness, "there is a kind of wickedness too shocking to describe to you. Did you ever hear of drunkenness?"

"Oh, yes," said Martyn, "but that is abominable, low, nasty."

We both said we had seen plenty of drunken people. Old Tommy Higgins, for instance, who fell into the mill-dam; and Bella, the woman whom the boys pelted on the

common ; we both knew them : but they, we thought, had never been much better ; they must have been always low, vulgar, dirty people. "Indeed," I added, quite sure there must be some mistake, "you don't know, dear mother, how shocking this man was. He could never have been your brother !"

"Martha, I know quite well how shocking he is," said my mother. "I have known it for years, and yet he is my brother."

"But he kissed me," I said, with great nausea, and some indignation.

"Martha," said my mother, "*I have kissed him.*"

I don't know what was in my mother's look and voice as she said this ; certainly there was something very unusual to her, and something which stopped us both from saying more. She, who was generally so quiet, so passive, whose eyes were for the most part so nearly closed upon a world which did not appear to afford her much interest ; she whose life seemed to be gently ebbing away, as if but a very shallow stream of vitality remained, now looked all feeling, her eyes vivid with emotion, and her lips quivering with sensations for which she found no utterance. I became quite alarmed at the effect our conversation had produced : and when she drew out her purse, and with trembling fingers selected a piece of gold which she bade me go and give to my uncle unseen by any one, it was really a relief to both Martyn and me, to run down stairs, in order to do something towards getting rid of so disagreeable an intruder, for my mother had told me to whisper to him that he must go away immediately.

It was quite clear that old Jane was not to be in the secret. So we watched our opportunity, and stole into the kitchen when we saw that she had left it, my brother all the while holding so tightly by the skirts of my dress, that I could with difficulty deliver my message, or execute my mission.

I shall never forget the outstretched hand, the eager look of that wretched man, as he clutched the piece of gold. I think he had expected more, and when I told him he must go away directly, there was a threatening, fierce expression, in his countenance, which perfectly frightened me.

Martyn was strangely affected by the whole scene. A mingled feeling of anger and fear seemed to have taken

possession of him with a strange fascination, such as persons sometimes experience in witnessing spectacles of horror, so that he would not leave me for a moment, nor cease from staring up at the man with eyes of wide, open wonder.

At last, with a dark, discontented look, the man rose from his chair, and walked slowly out of the house. We watched him as we should have done the departure of some monster, and with much the same feelings. But as we stood holding fast by each other, my mother's bell rang rather sharply and violently. Jane had been up stairs helping her to bed, so we knew that the bell must be for us, and we both ran with our utmost speed.

My mother was already stretched on her bed, where she spent so large a portion of her time; and within those dark, shrouding curtains, which concealed so many of her tears, for I knew she often wept there, though I was perfectly ignorant of any cause she had for grief.

Jane was sent out of the room as we entered, and the white hand with a quick motion was beckoning me to go near the bed.

"Is he gone?" asked my mother.

We both answered that he was.

"Not far, perhaps," said she. "I should like to give him a trifle more, poor thing. It is Christmas-day, you know. Could you not run after him with this?"

It struck me at that moment that there was something altered in my mother's manner, something different in the room. I looked around and saw a glass and spoon which Jane had neglected to take down with her. Did all people do like my uncle in degree; or could the same thing be right in one which was so desperately wicked in another? I am not sure that these thoughts assumed any distinct form in my mind at the moment, but the strong impression was there, and it has seldom been absent from me since.

In spite of some little trepidation which my mother's proposal occasioned, she looked so earnest, and spoke in such a pleading tone, that Martyn and I ran down immediately to execute our errand. Making our way out of the house by a side door, we found that the moon had risen, and that the dull cloudy afternoon had given place to a clear frosty evening. The crisp grass and fallen leaves rustled under our tread as we hurried along one of the garden

walks, by which we hoped to reach a private gate opening out directly upon the road where the man would have to pass; and here we thought we should be able to overtake him the more easily, as his movements when he left the house were as slow as they were evidently reluctant. I don't know whether it was from the sharpness of the air, but I perfectly remember that our teeth chattered as we ran, and that I had more than once to tell Martyn not to hold my dress so tightly, or he would certainly pull me down. Yet there seemed a kind of fate in my mother's errand, which did not admit of a moment's pause for doubt, or delay. So on we ran, until at last we emerged from the garden, and stood upon the road leading directly up to the house. Here we soon saw the dark figure moving on with an air of slouching idleness. His head drooped, and his knees seemed bent together, as if from habitual weakening of the joints.

"He is an ugly old fellow," said Martyn, after we had looked in that direction for a few minutes. "I don't think I will wait till he comes."

"Yes, Martyn, you will," said I, not very much encouraged by the prospect of being left alone.

"You can give him the money, you know, Pattie," said my brother, "just as well as if we both remained here."

I looked at the boy while he spoke, and the moon was now so bright I could see that his lips were working with a kind of speechless terror. A strange emotion it seemed to be which agitated his whole frame; for ever and anon he broke into a half laugh, as if endeavouring, by some desperate effort, to conceal that he felt afraid at all. Then again, a quick passion came upon him, and he seemed as if preparing to do some bodily violence to the wretched man. I had never seen him affected in so peculiar a manner; and certainly his behaviour, whatever might be the cause, was but little calculated to strengthen my courage. However I held his hand tightly, and managed to keep him close by my side, until the moment of trial came.

The poor man started when he saw us pass from beneath the shadow of the ivy which hung over the garden wall.

"My mother sent us to give you this," I said, holding out the money.

"What!" said he, with a laugh for which I was quite unprepared, "does your mother remember that we were

nursed under the same roof, that the same mother laid us both in one bed at night, and that it is not quite the thing for her to be rolling in plenty, while I am turned out at night to beg my bread?"

"My mother says you are a very bad man," chimed in little Martyn, before I had time to reply.

The man looked as if he would murder us both. He clenched his fists, and if a stick had been at hand I believe one of us, at least, would have felt the power of his arm.

Martyn became almost convulsed, and behaved very much like some animals which owe much of their fierceness to their fear.

"Come away, Martyn," said I.

"Stop!" cried the man, attempting to snatch hold of me; but we had already gained a few paces, and it was so evident we could beat him in speed, that our fears subsided in proportion to the distance we gained; so much so, that Martyn actually turned round to look, and then we both turned, and saw that the dark figure still remained where we had met.

My brother seemed to lose his senses more entirely now that we found ourselves in a position of safety. He laughed and cried by turns, and in spite of all I could do, first to soothe and then to restrain him, he would pick up pebbles from the road, and keep sending them towards the poor man with all his skill and all his might, shouting out as he did so, at the top of his strained voice, "You old scaramouch, you," with a variety of other epithets, equally offensive and dangerous, had we been near enough for them to be heard.

But, happily for us, the moon, and trees, and white hoarfrost, were the only witnesses to this explosion except myself; and I was too glad to find myself again within the precincts of home, and in perfect safety, to care much how Martyn amused himself. It was however long before he could be sufficiently quieted to be left alone in his bed that night; and when he did sleep at last, he had such dreadful dreams, and was otherwise so excited and disturbed, that I had to sit beside him for hours, holding his feverish little hand in mine.

I did not like to tell my mother, lest I should alarm her, and besides I should have been very reluctant to remind

her in any way of the probable and painful cause. So I wrapped myself up as warmly as I could, and creeping half into the narrow bed in which my brother lay, consoled myself by the pleasant belief that I was of use; and soothed by this conviction, I pursued through those long wakeful hours a train of thoughts which seemed for the time at least, to bring me many years nearer to the cares of womanhood than I had ever been before.

CHAPTER II.

I AM not aware that from the evening of the day already described, I ever saw again the wretched figure of our uncle Joshua; but it had made a deep impression on my feelings, which I tried in vain to get rid of. My brother Martyn lost this impression much more easily; and that which had awakened so much horror at the time, seemed only to excite his laughter and merriment whenever our interview with the miserable man was made the subject of discourse. At such times Martyn would even imitate his gait and manner, twisting his own small and beautiful mouth into such contortions, and shaping out his words so absurdly, that in spite of myself, I also laughed sometimes; though never, I think, without afterwards feeling sorry that I had done so.

The recollection of this man hung about me like that of some frightful dream, which no waking consciousness can wholly dissipate. But it was, alas, no dream which had visited my nightly slumbers, rather a sad, stern reality which had crossed my waking path; and often at the close of day, when gathering shadows rendered the outlines of surrounding objects indistinct, I was haunted with suspicions that, past some angle of a wall, or beneath the flickering shade of some waving bough, seated on the fallen trunk of some distant tree, or skulking under the shelter of some nearer hedge, that tottering, vacillating figure was groping its uncertain way towards our house, or waiting in hungry impatience until the deepening night should render its approach less likely to be observed.

Indeed, ours were exactly the kind of premises best calculated to afford such concealment as an unwelcome intruder might desire. My father owned a large, old-fashioned water-mill, situated in a beautiful valley, by the side of a little dreamy river, whose soft green banks were shaded in the summer time by many a bushy copse, with here and there a silver-leaved willow turning the soft lining of its pale green foliage to the sun. All around us were deep meadows, where lazy cattle grazed in great abundance; and these at the time of which I speak, were uninvaded by the shrill whistle of the engine, or the roll of the rattling train.

Our house was a long, low, rambling kind of tenement, in which the family of Bond had dwelt for many generations. It had no pretence to what people understand by style, but much to comfort, convenience, and respectability; nay, even to abundant means. For though my father in his youth had felt it no degradation to work amongst his father's servants in the mill; and though my brother Samuel's white face and flaxen hair might often be seen to assimilate to "that he worked in," by a considerable amount of extra whiteness brought in with him from the scene of his labours; yet, if carriages and well-fed horses, with a large array of out-door servants, and many other familiar indications of a family well to do in the world, might have been accepted as pledges of our gentility, we should certainly have passed muster with most of the surrounding neighbourhood, leaving out only a few exceptions within the pale of aristocracy.

The old residence itself I dare not attempt to describe.

It had too much the character of peace about it, too much the aspect of a real home, to be remembered with composure by one who early ceased to find peace within its walls, and to whom it no longer affords the welcome of a home. I will speak of it then simply as an ordinary building, long and low, with many windows in front, and a porch all overgrown with ivy that glittered in the wintry frost; and in the summer, was almost lost amongst wreaths of rambling roses, which threw out their laughing buds of beauty as if in mockery of the owls and bats; or, hanging aloft their varied stars of pink and white, seemed

to maintain exulting mastery over the austerity of the old walls beneath.

Our garden was considered by our neighbours a perfect gem in the way of high cultivation, fertility, and beauty. I cared not so much for its beds of gorgeous flowers; only as they pleased my mother, and tempted her to leave her chamber, and saunter out with Martyn and me; but I did care for the green nooks, nut walks, and shady alleys, which skirted these blooming beds; and through which my brother and I used to wander, hand in hand, planning through many a happy hour what we would do, and be, when years should have crowned our highest wishes with the glorious liberty of choosing and acting for ourselves.

But of all these well-remembered spots, our favourite was a green bank, or terrace, at the bottom of the garden, where it sloped down to the edge of the river. This slope was always kept in the most perfect order, the grass being so cut, that it made a soft green sward of velvet smoothness. Here too hung an old weeping willow, with its pendent branches half across the stream; and here grew the bright laburnum, and the scented lilac, with many ornamental shrubs more rare, and recent in their introduction, such as my mother loved to watch, and train, and even help forward in growth, as far as they could be helped by hands so soft and delicate as hers. Indeed the whole management of the garden was so dependent upon my mother's taste and judgment, that the old man who worked in it under her direction, seemed never to think of asking any other; and when his mistress was too ill to give her personal attention to his operations, he used to send us up with messages, continually requesting to know what was to be done; all which we delighted to deliver, and then to run back to the old man again, making as much of our embassy as if we had been negotiating betwixt two royal courts.

I seem to dream those days over again as I write, and yet I have left untouched the best of them, and the happiest. These were days in the very height of summer,—days when my father was from home, and when Samuel was engaged, we cared not how, so long as his white face did not come peering about upon our pleasures,—days when we prevailed upon old Jane, seldom without much entreaty, to let us have our tea in a kind of bower, or grotto, at the bottom of

the garden. Here, when all was warm and dry enough for my mother to join us, and when cloaks and shawls in such abundance had been carried to the spot, that she could not touch the ground, and scarcely felt the air—here, it was indeed a treat to sit and see her smile at Martyn's nonsense, while we listened with a pleasant lulling sense of pastime, to the rush and murmur of the falling water by which the mill was worked.

When I look back to these seasons of enjoyment, I always wonder why we were not altogether a happier family. I think we were ill-assorted, and uncongenial. I am sure my mother's marriage must have been so, though she never betrayed the fact to us; and if old Jane, who was so often in attendance upon her—if she was cognisant of the fact, she also kept it well, and never suffered us to detect in her the slightest want of respect or duty to her master; not that my father was a man who would have gone out of his way to do an intentional unkindness to any one, but he thought so little about others, that he never knew exactly what would give pleasure to them, or pain; and I have known him, by a single sentence which no one ever thought of disputing, order the gardener to displace some group of plants, to cut off some waving bough, or otherwise to despoil what my mother had spent days of earnest pleasure in contriving, and which she could not see destroyed without tears; but he never knew that it cost her one.

On these occasions, as on many others, my mother had one resource which never failed her,—she retreated to her chamber, and almost always to her bed. I do not suppose nineteen out of twenty times when she did so, that she was ill; not in body at least. Ill in mind I knew she was, for she often wept much; but we always sent old Jane up to her, or a particular bell was rung for Jane, and then I think some cordial must have been administered, for she afterwards became more comfortable, so that Martyn and I used to talk and play in the room, only on condition that we would not be too boisterous, or too loud. On occasions when my mother was very poorly, I usually sate with her alone, the restraint for any continuance being greater than Martyn knew how to bear.

For many days after the visit of Uncle Joshua, my mother kept her bed and saw no one, except that when Jane was

necessarily engaged in the affairs of the household, she bade me take my knitting and go and sit in my mother's chamber, without speaking to her or making any sound whatever. Towards the close of one of these days, when all was silent and still and dark, except for the occasional fall of a cinder from the dim fire, I remember being startled by hearing my mother suddenly say, "Is that you, Martha?"

"Yes, mother," I answered. "Is there anything I can do for you?"

"No, child," she said, "only—is Jane there?"

"She has gone out of the room, and we are quite alone."

"Tell me, then, Martha, has *he* been here again?"

"Not that I know of; we have never seen him."

"Nor heard his name mentioned?"

"No, not by any one."

"Does Jane never speak of him?"

"Not to us."

"I am glad of that."

"Does she talk about him to you, dear mother?"

"Oh, yes! she wearies me sadly. She can't help it, I believe. She seems not to be able to bear that any one but herself should tease me."

"Does *he* tease you, mother?"

"Child, what a question!"

"I have been thinking a great deal about him, dear mother. Don't you think we might help him in some way?"

"I wish we could: but I don't know in what way. I never did know."

"Have you ever tried, very, very much?"

"Yes, very much."

"What *can* make him so wicked?"

"My dear, we are all wicked, when we follow our own inclinations, and when we do not pray to God to help us to be good."

"Won't God help him, do you think?"

"You know, my child, that God will not always strive with those who are entirely opposed to him. He grows weary at last, and leaves them to themselves."

"That is very shocking—too shocking. Do you think my uncle was left so when he was a little child?"

"No, he was a good little boy; a fair-haired, gentle boy,

as good, and almost as handsome, as our little Martyn, whom we love so dearly."

"Somebody must have enticed him, then, and made him wicked."

"I don't know that exactly. He was very pleasant company, and went out a good deal, almost before he had grown to be a man."

"Did he do nothing bad, but—but one thing?"

"Not that I know of, for a long time at least."

"And when he did this, do you think the people who liked his company so much told him how wicked it was; talked to him well about it, and tried all they could to persuade him not to do so?"

"You ask me strange questions, Martha, which I cannot very well answer. You don't seem quite to understand the subject, and I do not wonder, for it is very difficult. But I will try to explain it."

"Do, dear mother, for I think of it so often, and I do wish from my heart that something could be done for that poor man."

"You see, Martha, the difficulty is here. There is no harm, no harm whatever, in taking what your uncle takes, in certain quantities. Indeed, it is quite necessary in most cases. It is taking too much that is so wicked."

"What is too much?"

"Dear child, you do perplex me so with your strange questions. I am not able to argue with you."

"Oh, dear mother, do pray go on. I will be very quiet, indeed I will, if only you will begin again, and explain all to me."

"Well then, you know that we ought to be temperate in all things. In the way in which our excellent clergyman, and your father, and other good gentlemen take these things, there can be no possible harm."

"And as you take them, mother?"

"Dear me, child, what do you mean? I take them, you know, by the express and earnest desire of my doctor. He would not answer for my life, if I should take less than he orders me. Indeed I sometimes feel it necessary to venture a little beyond, when my system is particularly low."

"When you are very ill then, dear mother, this does you good?"

"Certainly it does."

"But my father is not ill, nor the clergyman, nor the good gentlemen you speak of;—they are not ill, and yet they take a good deal sometimes."

"They very likely would be ill if they did not."

"It seems to me, mother, that you suffer very much, and are still very weak, notwithstanding this good medicine. I should like to find somebody who never took it at all, and see how they would look, and what they could do."

"I think I know such a person."

"A strong healthy man?"

"Yes, very strong; and one who is very active both in body and mind."

"And a good man too?"

"I am afraid not. At least nobody likes him, and but few speak well of him."

"What do they say?"

"That he is a dull, cold, unsocial kind of being, who affects singularity, and thinks himself better than other people."

"Yet even that is better than to be like poor Uncle Joshua. Did he ever try to live in the same way?"

"Yes, once; but he was soon laughed out of it."

"And now, I should think, they laugh at him still more. Oh! mother, do you think Martyn will ever be like that—our little Martyn?"

A quick movement of the curtains made me look towards my mother's bed. She had dashed them aside, and was sitting up, gazing at me with eyes which seemed to be searching quite down into my very heart.

"What made you ask that question, Martha?" said she, rather sharply.

"I don't exactly know," I answered, after a short pause, for I was afraid of speaking again, lest I should awaken emotions which it would be difficult to allay; but at length I said, "only because Martyn is sometimes rather a strange boy."

"He seems to be so light-hearted and happy," said my mother rather eagerly, as if anxious to have some fainting hope or wish confirmed.

"Yes, he is very merry," said I, "but yet a little thing pains him; and when his brow falls, and his lip droops,—oh! I cannot bear to see it. Can you mother?"

"Come here, Martha."

I went to the side of the bed. My mother's arms were extended. She clasped me to her bosom, and I felt it heaving as if with sobs of suppressed agony. I knew not what to say; but when I kissed her cheeks, and found how wet they were with tears, I took the soft white handkerchief which always lay upon her pillow, and wiped them away as gently as I could. It seemed to be the familiar office of that handkerchief, and I busied myself in this way until my mother found strength to speak.

"Martha," said she at last, "you are but a little girl, and yet it seems to me that if I solemnly commit this precious boy to your care, God will give you strength and power to keep him in safety, so that he shall never go astray in all his future life. Will you try, Martha?"

"Oh, mother!" I exclaimed, "I don't think I could keep anybody out of harm. How should I?"

"Not of yourself, Martha; you must pray to your Heavenly Father, and then, perhaps, he will teach you how to fulfil this great, this holy duty. I shall not be long with you, Martha. I never told you before, but I have a disease upon me which must prevent my living long."

"Then who will there be," said I, sobbing, "who will there be, in the whole wide world, to take care of Martyn and me?"

"I tell you, dear child," said my mother, "that you must be Martyn's caretaker."

"But who will be mine? Will any body?"

"I don't know that they will to any great extent, dear Martha: you must be satisfied to look only to that Heavenly Father, of whom I have spoken."

"Oh! mother!" said I, "it seems so very hard, and dreary to be left alone without you. And then to have Martyn to take care of. Indeed! indeed! I cannot do it!" And burying my face in the bed clothes, I sobbed aloud. In another moment a soft warm hand slid gently into mine, and a well-known voice with silvery tones, said, close beside my ear, "Is it me? were you talking about me, dear Pattie?"

It was Martyn himself who had stolen silently into the room; and moved as he always was by the sound of sorrow, and the sight of tears, had suddenly become softened down

into his tenderest mood, though without hearing enough of our conversation to know the reason why I wept.

On raising my head, I saw my mother's finger lifted in sign of caution, that I should say nothing to the child of what she had told me; and making way as I always did for him to stand nearest to her pillow, I soon saw the thin white arm drawn closely about his neck, while his round merry face, again arrayed in smiles, was turned up to her, apparently without the slightest recollection that any tone of sadness had mingled with the conversation he had disturbed.

Indeed no one could forget more easily than Martyn, anything which it pained him to remember. Children can generally do this with considerable facility, but my brother exceeded any one I ever met with, in his eagerness to escape all pain, whether of memory or anticipation. A task was his terror, a frown his hatred, a privation his disgust. Little epicurean as he was, we all humoured him, even down to old Jane, and made him, by our ill-judged indulgence of appetite and whim, about as selfish a little fellow as ever ate choice morsels of fruit and cake by the sick-bed of his mother. How was I to take care of him, through all the long journey of life which he had to tread? or how, indeed, was he to take care of himself?

I think it was my mother's notion that she herself had been too much crossed and thwarted at some period of her life—perhaps in the early days of her married lot—she never told us when, and that the stern discipline through which she then passed, had so injured her constitution, as to foster the seeds of that fatal malady under which she was now slowly sinking. However this might be, unbounded tenderness in the treatment of her children had grown to be the great principle of her life, from which I do not believe that any earthly consideration, scarcely any heavenly, would have induced her to depart. Towards myself especially, this mode of conduct was the work of principle—towards my brother it was the work of feeling, even more. Nor could I very much wonder in his case that it was so, even when convinced in my own mind that a sterner mode of treatment would be more beneficial, and really kinder in the end. I know not what there was in that round dimpling face of his, which won so much upon us all. I never did describe it,

and I never shall now. I have no likeness of him, except as it is painted on my heart. But often, in studying the paintings of the best masters, when I have found amongst the cherub host a face of guileless beauty, overshadowed with soft waves of golden auburn hair, I have said all silently within myself, "Such would have been my brother's countenance if he had died, and gone to Heaven, in the unstained innocence of happy childhood. Would that he had!"

CHAPTER III.

It is not my intention to occupy the reader with details which have no bearing upon my brother's fortune; nor were the swiftly-passing years of our early life particularly marked by events of interest. Some there were, which tended to the development of my brother's character, and of these I will endeavour to give a brief and partial sketch. The most deeply impressive was the sad event of our mother's death, which took place a few months after Martyn and I had been sent to school. I believe the reason why we were sent, had something to do with my mother's increased illness. It was a melancholy business altogether; for it was the first time I had ever been separated from my brother, and while I sadly missed his cheerful companionship, I made myself still more unhappy from the belief that he would never find another friend to love him and care for him as I had done.

Somehow or other, it always seemed to me, that Martyn was not constituted for enduring pain, and at any time of my life, I could rather have borne pain myself, than have seen him suffer. Joy was to him such intense joy; his emotions of delight were so brilliant, his countenance so beautiful in its lighting up, his laugh so rich, and his tones and attitudes so characteristic of light-hearted merriment, that it was worth the cost of a few tears, and a little privation at any time, to make my brother Martyn happy. He had however, a pretty large share of capability in this way himself, and most assuredly lost few chances of enjoyment which it was possible for him to secure.

I remember particularly on the occasion of our being sent for hastily from school to see my mother, if possible, again before her death, the same conveyance which took me on this dismal journey, was to pick up my brother by the way; and I distressed myself no little with imagining before we met, what the excess of his grief would be. He did, to be sure, look a little downcast for the first ten minutes after he had entered the coach, in which I was the only inside passenger; but the first time the vehicle stopped, he made his accustomed demand upon my purse for ready cash, and returned just as it was starting again, with such a supply of nuts and oranges, as occupied him fully all the remainder of the way.

I will not attempt to describe our arrival at home on this occasion, nor the melancholy scenes which marked this sad era of my life. Perhaps I do not remember them very distinctly; for if ever I would think them over again, a confusion of images so crowds upon me, that I should find it difficult to disentangle a single object from the mass. I remember the general stillness of the house, perhaps more than anything else; the darkened chamber where my mother lay, the solemn faces of all who went up and down stairs, the unusually tender tones of those who spoke to Martyn and me, and the little kindnesses and attentions we received from some who were not accustomed to be particularly kind. My mother herself we were not allowed to see on the first night of our arrival, but early in the morning, a cold winter's morning, I heard rushing steps along a passage which led to the room where I slept; and old Jane, bringing in a light, bade me get up, and come directly with her into my mother's chamber.

"And Martyn?" I asked.

"Yes, Martyn must come too; quick—be very quick," said the servant, and we both went and woke my brother, and took him shivering and half crying, along with us.

It was a dreadful scene. I should scarcely have recognised the features of the poor sufferer, who was propped up with pillows in the bed, breathing with difficulty, and feeling with her hands for something; still feeling, for they said she could not see, until some one brought Martyn close beside her, and took hold of her poor quivering hand and laid it upon his head.

That familiar touch seemed to be all she wanted. Her countenance became more like her own. It was then evident she could not see; but she knew well upon whose dear head her hand was laid, and her thin fingers wandered about amongst the locks of auburn hair with such fondness, as if they would never lose their clinging hold.

I looked in Martyn's little face almost unconsciously at the time, but I could afterwards remember distinctly how awestruck and terrified he looked, though remaining perfectly still. I believe he had no sensation of anything but fear, and scarcely realised that it was his mother upon whom he gazed; still less that she was dying. Presently we all became sensible that she wished to speak to us—to Martyn at least. Her lips moved, and those who stood nearest stooped down, and caught her words, repeating them to us. "I want my boy," she said, "to be a good boy." And then she enumerated at intervals, several virtues, amongst which even I could hear that she mentioned "self-denial" and "temperance—temperance in all things," she repeated. And then I think she charged him to pray, and she followed up this charge by drawing away her hand from his head, and clasping her thin fingers together, and commending us both to the care of our Heavenly Father. I believe when she had done this, that she began to feel for me, but in a moment the people about the bed looked and moved quite differently, and some one took hold of Martyn and me, and led us away out of the room; and from that moment we never saw my mother again.

After that there was a good deal of bustle and discomfort in the house. Strange people came in at night, going up stairs the back way; and workwomen fitted on my heavy black dresses; and then followed the funeral, soon after which Martyn and I were sent back again to school; for there was nobody at home to take care of us, or, indeed, to make it at all particularly pleasant to us to remain. Martyn, I am sure, was secretly glad to escape from such a dismal habitation as ours had become, and I was not sorry to return to the more cheerful companions and friendships which I had found at school.

I believe I never quite realised the heavy loss I had sustained, until the time of returning home again came round, some half-year after this. It was the pleasant summer-

time, and though I knew and recognised with one set of feelings that my mother was sleeping in her quiet grave, yet with another, I was continually picturing her sunning herself in the bright window of the old parlour, or seated in our garden bower. In fact, at the very time I knew and felt my loss, I was rebelling against it in my inmost soul. I was saying secretly that it *must not, could not be*. And so, when I entered the house, where all looked cold and dreary, though it was the height of summer, I found myself wandering about impatiently, as if in search of something which I could not find. At last, I wandered into the well-known room. That was enough. The whole truth fell upon me like a thunderstroke. I had never really known until that moment that I was motherless.

My brother Martyn evidently shared in these sensations, but as if by tacit consent, we never spoke about my mother, nor went into her room again, but wandered about, and amused ourselves as well as we could. The garden and the surrounding fields were our places of favourite resort. Here we wandered in a kind of dreamy idleness, fully realising the fact that we belonged to nobody, but to each other; for neither my father nor Samuel took much notice of us, certainly none that was calculated to draw us very closely within the circle of family union. School was but school after all, and home was home. So, like our companions, we made a point of rejoicing when the holiday-time came round; and, like our companions, we put off the day of return to the latest possible period.

It happened on one pleasant occasion that an aunt of ours invited us both to spend the summer holidays with her. She had no children of her own, but the very circumstance of the change, and the perfect newness of everything, afforded us a world of amusement. My aunt lived in the neighbourhood of a large town, but sufficiently remote to enjoy all the beauty and variety of gardens and extensive grounds. The family lived much in what is called society; and for the first time in our lives we were placed on terms of familiar association with a style of receiving and paying visits which taxed our notions of propriety to the utmost, lest we should do anything to disgrace either our relations or ourselves.

It was here that for the first time I had an opportunity

of observing that kind of tact which formed so striking a feature in my brother's character, as well as that strong love of approbation which, on occasions worthy of the effort, made him one of the most pleasing and graceful and companionable boys I have ever seen. Amidst the associations which surrounded us in this new kind of life, these elements of his character, told with wonderful effect; and while I could not help seeing that from the flattering notice he received, he was in danger of becoming intolerably vain, I also rejoiced, nay, absolutely gloried, in the fact, that all the most distinguished visitors at my uncle's residence singled Martyn out as the object of their especial favour.

"This is very different from home," said he to me one day."

"Yes," I replied, "but it would scarcely do to be living always in this way."

"Perhaps not," observed Martyn; "but it is very comfortable, for all that;" and as he spoke he applied to his lips the soft pulp of a delicious peach, the ripe colouring of which was scarcely more brilliant than the bloom upon his own cheek.

I have not yet mentioned a feature in my brother's character which gave the charm of softness to his other attractive qualities. It is true I could not help sometimes feeling that he was a little, selfish fellow, but I never witnessed any instance of his almost passionate love for animals, but I thought whole years of greediness were sufficiently atoned for by this generous propensity, as I then considered it.

It was during this pleasant visit that a temptation occurred to Martyn in this way, which it might have been well for him had I strengthened him to resist; instead of which, I fell into the snare myself, and in the end had to pay almost as dearly for my imprudence as he did. One of the fine ladies who was in the habit of calling upon my aunt, came one day in her carriage, accompanied by a beautiful little brown and white spaniel, all warm and silky, as those who have within them the genuine love of such creatures know well the touch of, and how much tenderness arises out of a single stroke over their soft and shining hair. While the usual conversation was going on, by which a call is generally filled up, Martyn had crept close beside the

lady, at whose feet the little favourite lay ; and as his hand glided gently over its head and long flowing ears, the animal, as if by instinctive consciousness, knowing how agreeable it was to its new friend, tried every time to lick my brother's hand, and exhibited many other signs of gratitude and delight.

I have seldom seen so pleased a countenance as Martyn's, while this silent process was going on. Indeed, so absorbing was the pleasure, that he crept closer, and closer, to the elegant lady, until, in order to support himself upon his knees at her feet, he actually laid one hand upon her lap without knowing that he did so. Instead of being annoyed at the freedom, the lady seemed rather pleased—flattered, perhaps, as people who have pets always are, by the kind notice hers was receiving, and gently laying her hand upon my brother's, she asked him, if he was fond of dogs.

Martyn looked up and answered, "Very."

"Would you like to have one of your own?" said the lady.

The astonished boy looked full into her face, with an expression which could not be mistaken.

"Perhaps," said the lady, "I shall some time be able to give you a little puppy—such a *little* thing!"

"Like this?" asked Martyn.

"Like that," answered the lady, "only quite little, and so soft."

"And quite my own?" asked Martyn again.

"Quite your own," the kind lady replied. "Would you like it?"

"Oh!" exclaimed my brother. That was all he could say, but his face spoke volumes; and, as he continued kneeling at the lady's feet, with one hand still in hers, and the other playing with the pretty spaniel, his head thrown back, so that his thick auburn hair fell off from his broad white brow, while his eyes flashed bright with happiness, and his round rosy mouth was dimpled into the sweetest smile, I do not think the pencil of the artist could have found a lovelier picture than my brother at the feet of that kind and graceful lady.

Like him I was delighted too; but, unlike him, I saw at once the difficulties of the case; and venturing forward, I managed to thank the lady in the best way I could, but at

the same time to suggest, that the thing was impossible, because Martyn was at school, and could not keep a dog there.

"Oh!" said the lady, laughing, "but he will not always be at school; and the little dog is not born yet. The pleasure I propose is a very distant one. Perhaps at Christmas the little dog will be ready. Will that do?"

"Yes, charmingly!" said Martyn; and, although I had certain fearful prognostications that home would be little better than school as to the means of maintaining a dog for Martyn's especial pleasure, yet, such was the happiness which even this distant prospect afforded, that I could not find in my heart, at that moment, to quench the pleasant hope by any other unfavourable suggestion.

Seldom as my brother seemed to look into the future, either for good or for evil, the case was quite different as regarded this lady's promise. In vain I told him, on our journey back to school, and afterwards in my letters, that such ladies were sure to forget; that the kindness, meant to please at the moment, would never find its expression in any positive act; in spite of all I could say to damp his expectations, for I really thought what I said, Martyn believed the promise as implicitly as he believed that the sun would rise every morning; and at last he had triumphantly to tell us, that the lady was true; that she had actually applied to my aunt to know how, and when, the little puppy could be sent to her *handsome nephew*; and that all was agreed upon between them as to the meeting of the coach by the lady's footman on our return home at Christmas; and the dog—the charming little dog—would then be our companion for the last two stages of the way.—"Only think!"

Such was the conclusion of Martyn's letter. I had, of course, no more to say, and was secretly too much pleased myself to wish to say anything to damp his pleasure; only, it must be confessed, that a fear crept over me now and then, lest all should not end well in this interesting business; for I knew that my father and Samuel both hated to have more animal life about them than was absolutely necessary, and four-footed animals especially. It was from my mother's side of the house that the weakness for such things

'came, and, unfortunately, Martyn and I both had more of it than our share.

What kind of journey we had before reaching the stage at which the footman was to appear, I leave the reader to imagine. The whole coach was scarcely large enough for Martyn, and I had to hold him fast with both hands to prevent him pitching out of the window, whenever it gave any extraordinary lurch or jolt. At last, we reached the eventful crisis of our hope. There stood the footman, with the most interesting of all baskets under his arm. Martyn had seized it before I had time to thank the man; but we neither of us peeped in at once. It was too sacred; and I scarcely know whether we should have peeped in at all, had there been other passengers in the coach—had there been vulgar eyes to look upon our treasure.

Passengers, however, there were none. We had our coach and our happiness all to ourselves: and happiness indeed it was. The little dog was very small—much smaller than we had expected; and Martyn relieved his overcharged feelings by laughing aloud, and pretending to make game of it—tail, and all; as if he considered it the most ridiculous thing in the world; at the same time that he treated it like the most delicate and precious. In fact, it was only permitted to me, with my profane hands, to touch it once or twice. I thought it felt very nice when I did so; but I refrained from obtrusively enjoying the sensation too often, because Martyn was quite sure the dog knew the difference betwixt my hand and his, and was less happy under my touch, however tender it might be.

It was a pity our journey so soon came to an end, for certainly, for the time being, we were as rich in enjoyment as any two children out of the many hundreds at that time returning to their different homes. Still, I must confess, that mine was not perfect enjoyment; for those sombre forebodings still kept creeping over me, and they came all the thicker and faster as we drew near my father's residence. It was not, however, until we crossed the bridge over the little river by which the mill was worked, and heard the coachman blow his horn in noisy announcement of his arrival at the village inn, where we were to be set down, that I ventured to ask Martyn what he thought it would be best to do with the little dog at first. But he shook off

my question with the air of a monarch who has conquered a province, and has no occasion to tell anybody what he intends to do with it. So I asked no more, but silently followed the servant who had been sent for us into the house.

My father met us in the hall. It was a most unusual thing, but though very much afraid, I was rather glad that he did so, as it afforded us an opportunity of telling him at once about the dog; and to my unspeakable satisfaction he did not appear so angry as I had expected. A slight expression of contempt escaped from his lips, but that was all; and he turned away to attend to more important matters than either the return of his children or what they had brought with them.

"So far so good," I whispered to Martyn; "but where can we put it?"

"Put it!" he exclaimed, for it was evident he had no idea it was to be separated for a single moment from his own person.

"Yes, put it," I answered. "Do you think they will be kind to it in the kitchen?"

"Kitchen!—I can tell you," said he, with great indignation, "it is not going to be in the kitchen."

"Where then?"

"In the parlour, to be sure."

"Oh! but do you think my father and Samuel would like it?"

"Who cares what they like! Besides they *must* like it; only feel;" and he gave it to me this time quite into my own hands to hold.

"Oh! yes," I said, "I know very well—how much I should like it. But you know, Martyn, they are quite different; and if I were you I would try for the sake of the dear little creature, not to vex them at first."

Martyn, however, remained unimpressed by any of my arguments, and would not hear of the dog being anywhere but in the parlour; so we opened the basket, and for a happy half hour before the family met round the tea-table, most thoroughly enjoyed the mischievous frolics of the little animal; which, glad to be released from its long confinement, performed such extraordinary antics, so full of the richest humour, that we both lost all sense of coming danger in the intense fun of the passing moment.

My father came in as usual with the newspaper in his hand, expecting, as the custom of the family was, that the most unbroken silence would be observed while he enjoyed his meditations upon the state of the country in general, and upon trade in particular. The first thing he did, after drawing his chair to the fire, was to set his heavy foot unconsciously upon some limb or member of this new inmate of his household, when a terrible yelping and screaming ensued, such as even a more patient man than my father could scarcely have been expected to bear.

"Take that animal away directly," said he.

Martyn and I huddled it into the basket as quickly as we could, and were stealing out of the room with it, when my father called us to stop. "If you think," he said, "that I am going to have that creature kept in this house, you are very much mistaken. I tell you, once for all, that if I ever find it here again, I shall have it drowned without another word."

"Never mind, Martyn dear," said I, for my brother began to cry bitterly, as soon as we had escaped from the room, "I'll try and think of something we can do."

"I wonder what?" said he, in the most dolorous tone, "we might just as well drown it at once, for that will be the end of it, I know. I've a good mind, Pattie, to go and throw it into the mill dam this very night."

"Nonsense, Martyn! My father did not forbid us to keep it."

"I wonder where we are to keep it, if not in the house, or what will be the good of keeping it anywhere else."

"I think I know what we can do. There is old Peter, the carter. Their cottage is not very far off. I dare say they could keep it for us if we gave them something for it."

"Yes, and all those odious, cruel, filthy little Peters would be pulling it about the whole day long. Oh! Pattie—Pattie!" and Martyn cried again, so loudly that I was obliged to get him out of the way, as well as the dog, lest my father should hear him. At last it was settled between us, that for the present the little dog should be accommodated in a kind of hay-loft above the stable, "all in the dark and the cold," as Martyn said, and that when night came I should take it into my bed-room, in order that it might have company; for while Martyn thought it would

be great luxury to have it in his own, he knew that his dormitory was not secure from occasional inroads from my father and brother Samuel, who made it their business to ascertain that his candle had been properly put out. I doubted very much, however, whether the luxury would have been as great as Martyn supposed; for the poor little creature, just separated from its mother, kept me awake with its cries nearly all the night.

Upon the whole, the possession of this treasure, like that of so many others, brought with it much more pain than pleasure. In some way or other, we managed to get through a considerable portion of the holidays without my father being again annoyed by the presence of the dog; and certainly there were days when his absence from home allowing us the free occupation of the parlour, we did enjoy the gambols of our little pet in a no ordinary manner; for either it was the most charming of all little dogs, or we, unused to have anything of the kind to call our own, believed it to be so; and of one pleasant fact we were at all events fully assured, the attachment was mutual between it and us.

I believe to this hour, that it would have done my brother a world of good to have humoured his fancy on this point to the full extent of his inclination; but this could not be under my father's domestic rule; and one unlucky day, about a week before our return to school, happening to reach home earlier than usual, he actually walked into the parlour before we heard his step, and found us both on the floor, my unhappy self with the dog in my lap, and Martyn, audacious boy, with a glove of his father's in his hand, at which the animal was tugging with all its might.

My father stopped when he reached the middle of the room, and we stopped also in our play. We neither of us looked up. It would have been of no use if we had, for my father's countenance never betrayed the nature of our doom. He looked no more angry when he pronounced the severest sentence than when he bade us snuff the candle or stir the fire; nor do I believe he felt in his own mind the least portion of that bitterness which his irrevocable judgments often seemed intended to convey. He only did not care, that was all.

So he now told us, with the utmost composure, that what

he said at first about the dog should be carried out, and actually done—the dog should be drowned.

Martyn ran out of the room. I don't know where he went; but I, woman like, thought I would try the experiment of an appeal; and with tears, which I could not restrain, streaming fast from my eyes, I clung to the back of my father's chair, after he had seated himself, for some minutes before I could speak.

"Go away, Martha," said he. But still I stood crying behind him.

"Do you hear?" he said again, becoming very much annoyed by my suppressed sobs.

"Yes, father," I said, at last; "but—"

"But what?"

"For Martyn's sake—"

"What about Martyn?"

"He does love the little dog so."

"The dog, again!—is it? Nonsense, child. It is altogether out of the question. The thing ought to have been done at once. You and Martyn go to bed. Samuel will see to it."

"But, father—"

"Go away."

I went away, taking the dog with me, closely—oh! how closely—folded in my arms.

"Martyn," said I—for I found the poor boy leaning with his head against the wall in the passage—"Martyn, it's all over." And I put my arm round his neck and laid my cheek against his; but in another moment he shook me off. I could not tell what possessed him, for he seized the little dog quite roughly round the throat and ran off with it so fast that I could not overtake him. Away—away he ran, all down the garden; I could hear his steps, though I could not see him, for the night was very dark; but I knew every inch of the way, and I found him at last on the bank by the river, where he was standing perfectly still, with no dog in his arms. I listened. A little splash-splashing noise could be heard about the middle of the stream. I could not bear it, nor Martyn either. He ran back again as fast as he had come. "This will never do," thought I; "it is too cruel." I rushed into the cottage of the old gardener, told him all, and implored him to go immediately

and make sure work of what had been so madly begun. And I knew that he would carry out my wishes to the letter; for ever after my mother's death the old man seemed to transfer the service of his heart, as well as hand, to me.

I then went up-stairs to Martyn's room. We had no light; we did not want to see or be seen. We neither of us spoke, for we knew not what to say. Horror more than sorrow filled my soul. I felt as if we had been engaged in some dark deed of guilt, and I could not pray. Martyn had leaped upon his bed; and when I felt for him there he was sitting with his head resting on his knees. I thought it best to leave him so; but I stole into his room again, and yet again, never speaking a word; until, at last, I had the satisfaction of knowing, by the way in which he breathed, that he had fallen asleep. Poor boy! I covered him up warmly with the bed-clothes, and then I went into my own room and knelt down, and I also fell asleep.

My father, as usual, read a long newspaper quite through that night, and then, with all comfort and composure betook himself to rest, without ever having asked where his children were, and entirely forgetful, no doubt, of having done anything to cause them a moment's pain. How little some of us are aware of the real nature and tendency of what we do!

CHAPTER IV.

WE often hear that system called discipline, which is only restraint. Thus it would have been said of my brother and myself that we were under discipline, and strict discipline too; whereas we were no more disciplined than the poor animal, whose range of experience extends not beyond the length of its own chain; who never learns where it ought to go, or when to stop; nor knows the difference betwixt that course which it ought to pursue, and that which it ought not.

A few more years of school-life glided over our heads, and then I was released, and permitted to take what place I could find in my father's household. It was but a narrow

place—that into which I silently grew ; for, except when Martyn returned home at the holidays, I had a strong conviction that my presence was essential to nobody there. It is true I chatted with the old gardener, and tried to interest myself in his occupations ; I made him warm clothing too in the winter-time, and did other little services for the neighbouring poor, which had the effect upon my own heart of keeping up the springs of life and cheerfulness ; but all within the house was dull enough to a young girl of my age ; and I felt to miss my mother's kind companionship, even more than when I was a mere child.

As I am not, however, in my own person, the heroine of this story, I will skip over this somewhat dreary and uneventful time, and enter at once upon the return of my brother Martyn after his scholastic duties were brought to what he considered a happy termination. I had good reason for believing that in these pursuits my brother was more quick than steady or persevering ; and that the getting into what he called *scrapes*, formed no inconsiderable portion of his school experience. Thus he brought home with him a somewhat questionable character ; but he was very glad to bring it, and that for the last time.

In fact it was a very interesting period upon which Martyn was now entering. There was the grand choice to be made of a business, or a profession, for the future. Upon this point, for the first time within my knowledge, my father and Samuel differed. My father wanted to put Martyn into the mill, I suppose to grind him down ; for he had no very favourable opinion of the boy, and thought him greatly in need of discipline—of restraint, and especially of humiliation. But Samuel had reasons of his own for not wishing him to be in the mill ; so the great heads of our house, and the disposers of our destiny, became for once opposed to each other ; and, but that so much was hanging upon the issue, we should have derived no inconsiderable amount of amusement from the manœuvres which each party had recourse to, in order to bring about his object without openly differing from the other. I suppose they both maintained the notion that the house could not stand if they failed to hold by each other ; or, perhaps, they each feared that Martyn and I should throw in our weight, small as that was, and so divide the question for

ourselves, if one of them became weakened by separation from the other.

Martyn himself had a profound disgust for his father's business, partly from associations of no very pleasing nature, and partly because he hated all mere labour. Invention amused him, and consequently he did not mind the trouble of it; but to work from morning till night without variety, and consequently without amusement! not all the gold ever gained by this kind of employment could have reconciled him to spend what he thought the best years of his life in a mill.

Samuel actually deigned to ask him, with some appearance of consideration, what he would really like to be; and Martyn at once replied, "an engineer." Samuel pursed up his mouth, spoke of expense, and then said he would see what could be done. Martyn was all hope. We had an uncle at that time engaged in some extensive public works. He was written to on the subject;—we knew he was written to, because we happened to see the direction of the letter;—but for anything else that we were permitted to know, we might as well have attempted to solve the great riddle of the Sphinx.

Thus time rolled on, and I saw plainly that Martyn was tiring of the dulness and inactivity of home; for he had neither horse to ride, nor dog to scour the country with, nor was he permitted to enjoy the manly privilege of possessing a gun. Winter came on, and found him still in these circumstances. At last he bethought himself of making a kind of study, museum, or garden-house, of the grotto by the river side; and to this he repaired day after day with the old gardener, to help him; and even my abilities in the building line were not unfrequently called into requisition. In this occupation he became very happy, and really his resources were so ingenious, and his management of such materials as he could find so much to the purpose, that something very much like the interior of a room at least began to delight our eyes. We even got some spare articles of furniture into it, by stealth, and only waited for some heavy beating rains, to test whether the roof and window were secure.

The storm came at last, and much to our satisfaction, the structure held together with wonderful tenacity. One

great want, however, was brought to light by the increased cold of the weather—there was no fire-place—and the damp of the mud walls rendered the place altogether untenable as a habitation. Many expedients were suggested by my brother for the supply of this want, all about equally beyond our reach. At last, by waiting our time, combining our resources, and, above all, pressing one of the carters into our secret service, we managed to obtain a stove from the neighbouring town, and to get through the formidable business of having it fixed, while my father was absent, and Samuel known to be closely engaged.

Indeed, neither of our two rulers had, up to this time, the slightest suspicion of the nature of our proceedings; for, as already stated, their habit was to take so little notice of what we did, or how we disposed of ourselves, that so long as we did not transgress certain rules, nor in any way trouble them, we could enjoy a good deal of freedom. Besides which, we were allowed a very respectable share of pocket-money; an advantage which, old Jane had told me before she left the family, we owed in great measure to the death-bed entreaties of my mother, who considered the fact of being destitute of pocket-money one of the greatest calamities to which a human being could be subjected. Perhaps she herself had known what it was at some period of her life. However this might be, our wants—perhaps I ought to say *mine*—were so small, and our temptations to spend money so few, that I was enabled to supply my brother pretty frequently with those loans from my purse which he was in the habit of demanding, and which he received with the greatest ease and complacency, unshackled by any particular scruples about paying them back.

It was a great day with us, that of the setting of the stove, and of course we must have a fire in it almost before the chimney was fixed. A fire we had, and furiously it smoked, inside as well as out; but the grand point to be attained was to ascertain whether the smoking of the chimney could be seen from the window of my father's bedroom, as we had some reason to fear. So, when all was in full operation, I ran into the house, and up-stairs into this room, where, placing myself at the window, I made sure that the stove might smoke away in safety, as much as it

liked; and, with this pleasing intelligence, I hurried back to the scene of interest.

It was worth something—worth anything but my father's anger—to see Martyn as he was now, in all his glory. I cannot say that his appearance had its usual recommendation of being either clean or gentlemanly. He was smeared with coals and mortar almost up to his forehead; but he could make himself on such occasions so exquisitely amusing, he had such a fund of ready humour arising out of every event, however rapidly it transpired, that no description of mine could do him justice, or convey any adequate idea of the laughter and fun he was capable of exciting. Such characters are, indeed, most difficult to describe; for, far from being a wit, there was little to repeat of what Martyn ever said, even in his most brilliant moments; and yet all persons with whom he was perfectly at ease, and who really understood him, were affected in the same manner by his wild spirits and his drollery.

"Now," said Martyn, clapping his blackened hands together, "this will do, indeed. We have a fire, you see, Pattie, and two seats and a table. We only want something to set upon it; for you know I am going to invite Ralph Johnstone. I always intended to invite him, but could not expect him to sit dummy with my father and Samuel."

"Ralph Johnstone," I asked, feeling rather alarmed, for I recognised the name as belonging to one of his most spirited companions at school, so far at least as the term spirited may be understood to imply persistence in forbidden things.

"Yes, Ralph Johnstone," replied my brother; "you know very well who I mean. He was the best fellow possible to me."

"But my father—"

"Oh! you are going to speak to my father about his coming, yourself."

"I don't think I dare."

"Yes, you will dare, when I tell you who he is. My father, you know, likes great people. Tell him these are the Johnstones of Grange, and he'll come round directly."

"Well, I suppose I must try; but I shall be very much afraid. And, besides this, Martyn,—Now, you must not be vexed with me."

"It's very likely I shall; but what do you wish to say?"

"I don't quite like the idea of this boy, myself."

"You?—what do you know about boys?"

"I know some things you have told me about this Johnstone, and I wish you would just give up asking him."

"Pooh! It's only for a day. You take no notice, and we shall do very well. But we must have some wine, Pattie, and a few niceish kind of things. Ralph smokes, too; so you see I shall have to lay in quite a store—in short, to go to housekeeping at once. Come, be a good angel to me, this time, at least, Pattie. Don't you go and turn against me, or everything will go wrong."

I seemed to hear my mother's parting charge as Martyn said this. Yet what could I do? To approve of his plan was impossible; and yet to take any active steps calculated to prevent its being carried out, might be to expose him to the fearful consequences of my father's indignation. As I weighed these considerations, the whole beauty and value of his ingenious little domicile, which had afforded us so much enjoyment in the building, vanished from my mind, and I wished it would fall to the ground, or be carried away by the midnight blast. What was I to do? Again and again, my brother plied me with the most insinuating persuasions; so I yielded at last, and promised him with tears in my eyes, that I would faithfully comply with his wishes, so far as to bring by stealth, into the place, *one* bottle of wine, and any amount of other provisions that he might desire; and that, beyond this, I would ask my father if he would consent to a visit from one of Martyn's school-fellows.

I had little heart to make my request to my father, because I did not really wish him to grant permission for the boy to come; but such was my weak affection for my brother at that time, that I pressed the matter as far as I dared, and strictly adhered to the mode of pressing it which Martyn had laid out for me. I had stolen for this purpose, in my father's private room, a place into which we seldom intruded. It had a high dismal window towards the garden, but I do not recollect that ever in my life, I had taken the trouble to look out from this window myself.

Interrupted in his darling accounts, my father, as might be expected, did not take very pleasantly the announcement of my desire to speak with him; and when he learned the

nature of what I had to say, he seemed rather inclined to take me by the shoulders, and hand me out of the room.

"You know who the Johnstones are?" I inquired, according to our preconcerted plan.

"Not I," said my father. "Who are they?"

"The Johnstones of Grange."

"Ho!"

"This boy was very good to Martyn while they were at school together."

"The Johnstones of Grange?" my father repeated, evidently attaching very little value to my second suggestion.

"Well, if that be the case, and if the boy is not likely to stay long, I don't know that I shall mind him very much. When do you want him to come?"

"On Friday."

"I shall be from home on Friday."

"Will you?" said I. Now I knew very well that my father would be from home on that day. I knew, moreover, it was the main point in our plan that he should be from home; and yet I had the art to throw into the tone of my voice, as I spoke, quite an expression of surprise, and even a little sorrow, as if I had not been previously aware of the fact, and regretted it.

"Never mind," said my father, turning to his account book; and I, not very reluctantly, was leaving the room, when he rose to stir the fire, as people often do, before they settle themselves again, after an unwelcome interruption.

"Dear me!" said my father, suddenly walking to the window. And I was so startled by the unusual quickness of his manner, that I stopped in the doorway, and looked back. "Dear me!" he said again, as he gazed still more earnestly towards the garden, "where is Samuel, I wonder? There seems to me to be smoke rising. Where can it be? Some of the buildings must be on fire. Dear me, child! Don't stand there, run to the mill; run and tell Samuel."

I did run, but not to the mill, nor yet to tell Samuel. I ran straight to the bottom of the garden, and surprised my brother in a quiet selection of cigars, which he was making for his friend. My intelligence deprived him at once of all presence of mind; but I was always more self-possessed and decided than Martyn, and snatching up the bottle of wine which had already been brought, with many

other preparations for convivial enjoyment, I hurled them all into the river, never calculating upon which would be likely to float to the surface. Happily I had time to make the clearance tolerably complete; and Martyn, always addicted on any emergency, to the more prudential part of valour, had time to run away; so that I was left alone on the spot to bear the whole shock of the discovery.

Some time elapsed before this discovery was made, so seldom did any one ever resort to that part of the premises except my brother, the old gardener, and myself. At length it struck me that I also, without loss of honour, might escape, and thus avoid the outpouring of that wrath which I knew our late proceedings, when fully known, would excite. And yet there was nothing wrong in the building of the curious little hut into which my mother's garden bower, or summer grotto, had been converted. Ah, what a wide step is taken on the path of moral danger when parents first teach their children to tremble at the *detection* of an innocent act, more than at the *concealment* of a wrong one.

What took place upon the examination of Martyn's hut we neither of us ever knew; but that very day some half dozen workmen were set to tear it down, so that before evening came on, so loose and ill-combined had been the whole covering in, that it was roofless at least, and exposed to the pelting rain and sleet of a stormy winter's night; we learned too, but not before some time had elapsed, that Samuel had taken the new stove to warm a kind of side office which he occupied in the mill. I will not say that either of us wished it might smoke him out; but I know we did wish that the money with which it had been purchased was back again in our pockets.

My father of course called Martyn and me to his secret and solemn councils that night. He talked to us, as usual, as if we were very wicked young people, the grief of his heart, and the shame of his house: and we had been so trained from childhood to listen without remonstrance to charges of this nature, uttered quite coolly, and with no evidence of passion, that we both sate in silence until he had finished, when we rose, and walked away without a tear. And yet it was to me a very painful occasion. All such occasions were inexpressibly painful, because they left upon my heart a sensation like that of having deserved, by some

deed of monstrous enormity, all the reproaches which had been heaped upon me.

Oh, how I thought of my poor mother, that miserable night! as I lay, burying my face in the pillow, lest my wild and uncontrollable weeping should be heard. I was afraid at one time that it was, for there came, as I fancied, a tap at my door; and while I listened, it was distinctly repeated. I answered, and then the door of my chamber was gently opened, and Martyn put in his head.

"I'll have Johnstone yet," he said in a loud whisper.

"My dear Martyn," I asked, "are you mad? What can you mean?"

"I mean that I'll have Ralph Johnstone yet." And then he uttered something very shocking; words which I had never heard from his lips before. I began to be very much afraid, and trembled all over.

"Pray go to sleep, Martyn dear," said I, "you'll think quite differently in the morning."

"No, I never shall, Pattie; never, never. I'll run away, that I will, if they don't find me some place to go to. Nobody could stand this; I defy them."

I told him many people had painful things to bear from those who did not understand them; that all would come right in the end; and many other empty words I said, I suppose, in a soothing tone of voice, for after a while, he grew more calm, and went away. I ascertained, too, that he soon fell asleep; but I could not sleep. For the first time in my life I realised that night what it is to be cast upon the stormy sea of life without a pilot, or a guide. My sensations were those of loneliness, and I, a poor wanderer, in myself so frail, that I seemed to be shaken by every wave to the very centre of my being, and torn, even in my heart-strings, by every blast.

My father appeared wonderfully little affected by what had transpired, considering the emotions which had been excited during this unhappy day, and the amount of effort which had been engaged in the work of destruction. I had reason afterwards to believe that his mind was a good deal occupied about this time by some of those cross occurrences to which trade is liable; so that neither he nor Samuel followed up their strong disapproval of our proceedings with any farther persecution, nor indeed, with any farther notice.

My brother kept his determination of still entertaining his favourite schoolfellow; but he necessarily changed his plan of entertainment. A pretty considerable demand was made upon my purse in order to supply the requirements of this change: but beyond giving him all the money I had in the world, even to my very last shilling, I had nothing further to do with his hospitality, or his mode of showing respect to his friend.

Ralph Johnstone came on the day originally proposed, and even called at our house, though I did not see him. I believe the two boys supped together at the village inn, one of those old-fashioned way-side houses of entertainment in which, at that time, the most respectable travellers often found quite as agreeable a welcome as in a private house.

How my brother and his friend found it I never heard, for Martyn ever afterwards remained profoundly silent on the subject. My father returned later than usual that night, and remained in consultation with Samuel so long, that I believe they both forgot to look into my brother's room. I sate up shivering in cold and darkness, for I knew he was not there; and when I heard them coming slowly up the stairs, an agony shot through me, such as I never shall forget. But they both passed on to their different apartments, thinking, I dare say, more about the price of corn than the value of a young heart thoroughly alienated from home duties and affections.

So Martyn escaped detection that night; and when he came in to a late breakfast the following morning, no one asked where he had been, or why he looked so pale, and altogether so sheepish and strange.

It happened soon after this, that the uncle to whom so many applications had been made by Samuel, at last consented to receive my brother Martyn into his office, and he left his home, I believe without a single regret, unless it might be that he would rather have taken me along with him.

CHAPTER V.

It is a melancholy task to have to speak of a death without sorrow, of a departure without regret. And yet, such I have some reason to think, was the passing away of my father's long-hidden soul from the deep conflict of its mortal cares. The immediate cause of his death was an accident which occurred to him while I was from home; and when sent for to attend upon his last moments, I was too late to exchange with him a single word of intelligent recognition.

For three days and nights I watched beside his bed, hoping, oh, how fervently! that some light would dawn upon his wandering mind, by which I might know that he was aware of my presence. But no such happy moment cheered my long vigil. In vain I tried by every means in my power to awaken this intelligence. The effort was so painful, that nothing but the most intense desire could have enabled me to make it. Sometimes I thought the heavy eye was opening; sometimes I thought the hand was about to be raised in token that I must be ready to attend. But no; all was darkness, sleep, and death. His spirit passed away without our being conscious of the exact moment; and so passed away from me for ever

“ The secrets of that shrouded heart
That seemed to *me* so stern.”

I felt this the more, and I endured the greater anguish while maintaining my silent watch, because I believe it was in my nature to have loved a father almost to idolatry, if such had been permitted to me. It was the great craving of my heart to have some one to look up to, who was older and wiser than myself; and yet my lot was cast in utter loneliness, as regards the accustomed support which women almost always find; and instead of looking up to any human help for guidance or protection, it seemed to be my appointed portion to give the help I so much needed, and to be looked up to for guidance by one who, at the same time that he asked, would often wantonly reject it.

My brother had been away from home for more than a

year before my father's death, but he was summoned on that occasion, and arrived in time for the funeral. He was of course present at the reading of the will, and listened, like myself, with ill-concealed astonishment, to the facts which it revealed. We were certainly far from being the first to testify how entirely money can evaporate on the reading of a will; but still it was wonderful to us, and remains so with me to this day, that there should appear to be so very little property left by my father, to be divided amongst his three children. It was but natural, and somewhat reasonable, that Samuel should have the largest share, he being so much older, and for so long a time associated with my father in the business; but the startling fact was, that Martyn and I had next to nothing; only some two or three hundreds, as the remaining portion of my mother's little fortune, which had been settled upon her children. The lawyer, however, tried to explain matters to us, and talked a great deal about mortgages, and chancery suits, and things we did not understand, never having entertained the least idea of my father being other than a very substantial and easy-going man, with regard to money matters; and, above all, never having been in any way admitted even to the most distant view of his real circumstances. But now, though far from understanding what the lawyer so lucidly explained, the main facts were clear enough: Martyn and I were almost penniless; we must both look out for ourselves, and that pretty sharply, for home could be no longer a home for us.

It is true Samuel said a few constrained words about my remaining, if I liked; not that he needed any one, and so forth, at which Martyn professed himself extremely indignant; I wonder, poor fellow, how much better he would have done for me; but happily there came, just at the most critical moment, a kind letter from the uncle and aunt at whose home Martyn and I had once spent our pleasant holidays, proposing that I should go, for the present at least, and live with them. The letter stated that my aunt had fallen into feeble health, and as they had no children of their own, and I felt sure I could make myself useful to them, the prospect was so far agreeable, as it afforded me a present resource, and that without any painful suspicion that I should be uncomfortably dependent.

Martyn found it much more difficult than I did to settle

upon the will, which he pronounced to be unjust and iniquitous. He even insisted upon looking into my father's accounts, and doing many other manly things which, as he was still under age, were of course refused to him; and whenever he stormed and upbraided Samuel as being a party to the making of the will, that quiet personage walked solemnly away into his mill, as little affected by my brother's passionate words as by the clatter of his own machinery; indeed, far less so.

So poor Martyn had nothing for it but to leave the house and all it contained to Samuel's sole proprietorship, even my mother's watch and all her favourite articles of plate, with some old family pictures, for which both Martyn and I had a great fancy; all our books, too, which Samuel never read—everything must remain in his hands, and we two must go forth and seek our fortunes and our possessions elsewhere. I took good care, however, that Martyn should be got safely out of the house before I left it; and after collecting together every article which the law, or Samuel, permitted him to call his own, I packed them up as carefully as I could and sent them off with him to his situation in the household of the bachelor uncle with whom he was learning the business of his choice.

It was no difficult matter, after this, to go myself. There was no one to regret my absence but the old gardener and a few families amongst the poor, whose homes I had been accustomed to visit, taking with me sometimes such comforts as could be secured without being missed from my father's household. Amongst others, our old servant, Jane, now lived at the distance of a few miles, in a cottage left to her by a relative, and with her I determined to spend a few hours before entirely leaving the neighbourhood. I meant my visit kindly, but a more prudent regard for my own peace of mind would have kept me away. Jane had been a faithful and attached attendant upon my mother; but she was too much a partisan to be a safe depository of my recent troubles; and the way in which she fell upon my father's memory, abusing him and Samuel, opening out my mother's old grievances, with many touching incidents of her sad life, most probably a good deal exaggerated, made me more miserable than words could have told, for days and weeks afterwards. Indeed, through life I have found it

dangerous to trust to the outpourings of a warmly attached female servant—perhaps to those of a warmly attached woman of any rank, when one has a host of grievances to detail; for no sooner is the statement of pain or sorrow made, however harmless or unconscious may have been the cause, than forth bursts a storm of indignation and abuse which no apology on our part can restrain; and thus *blame*, sharp, strong, and inextinguishable, is sure to be laid at somebody's door, even when we have least intended that it should. Lovers of sympathy had therefore better beware how and where they seek it.

I know that my own impressions after this interview were those of cruel injustice on the part of my father, and cruelty and meanness both on that of Samuel. I felt this more deeply for Martyn's sake than for my own; and, strange to say, such was the colouring imparted by the partial feelings of the servant, that the very boy who used to be her torment and her dread, was now the "poor dear pretty creature, with his sweet smile and pleasant ways;" so that any one to hear how the woman went on, would have supposed he had been the very joy and solace of her life.

With these impressions, for I scarcely, even then, could have said they were convictions, I went home, packed up my few items of property, and departed from my father's house, leaving even my mother's watch behind, to be handed over to Samuel's wife, if ever he should have one.

With my Uncle and Aunt Russell, I was far from being unhappy. I soon found that by the exercise of a little tact and a little effort, I could make myself both useful and tolerably agreeable to them. They both loved company, and yet my aunt was scarcely strong enough to bear the burden which company imposed. So I stepped in very opportunely, between her and her servants, and soon found, to my satisfaction, that I had quite enough to do.

But the most agreeable fact connected with this part of my experience, was the favour that Martyn found with these substantial relatives; and the circumstance of his living so near that I could see him often, and indeed enjoy the high privilege of having him invited to most of my uncle's parties, where he soon began to fill an honoured and conspicuous place. It was wonderful to me to see how the boy fell in with my uncle's tastes and wishes; how he caught the tone

and manner of the gentlemen whom he met at my uncle's table, and in all respects became worthy of a place there. Mr. Russell, I soon found, disliked nothing more than a raw youth, green from the country, and uninitiated in the usages of society. Thus he watched my brother with a jealous eye, giving him hints and promptings as to his behaviour, which Martyn was only too quick to improve upon. Amongst other things, my uncle was fond of the pleasures of the table, and would discuss the quality of his wines with any one. Indeed the subject of cellar and vintage seemed to be one of untiring interest; and Martyn learned to discuss these matters with the rest. By degrees he became so efficient, and so popular amongst my uncle's guests, that I have known Mr. Russell leave the table, after placing Martyn in his chair, while he went to enjoy an after-dinner nap. These were of course occasions when he had no very distinguished visitors; but it struck me, they were occasions of great freedom and merriment; for we might almost have known when my uncle had retired, by the peals of laughter which always issued from the dining-room after Martyn had been installed in the office of host.

All this, my uncle and aunt said, was telling well upon my brother's fortunes. He was making the acquaintance of gentlemen of property and distinction in the county. They were delighted to see him so great a favourite, could not too much commend the manner in which he acquitted himself, and upon the whole, considered him in a very hopeful position with regard to the future. Nor were these hopes without a ready echo in the general opinion of the neighbourhood, more especially when, some two or three years after my father's death, my brother came under the favourable notice of one of the most prosperous and rising men within the whole circle of our acquaintance.

It happened that in the busy seaport town of B——, where Martyn lived with our bachelor uncle, and near which Mr. and Mrs. Russell resided, there was one of those fortunate individuals, who had raised himself from low extraction to a position of credit and respectability, by his great cleverness in engineering. I scarcely know to what department of this profession he would have been said to belong at the time when we first knew him, but his talent seemed to extend to almost every kind of invention and

improvement, by which the facilities of business, and of money-making, are increased. Unlike many others who have thus been raised from the ranks of labour, Mr. Henley was one of nature's gentlemen, possessing, I should suppose, a large amount of natural goodness, at the same time that his manners, if not polished, were at once so manly and so courteous, that he seldom offended the most refined, or failed to command respect from the most exalted.

No doubt Mr. Henley knew and felt his own defects of education and of early association; but being so lucky and so rising a man, the world permitted him to go on very comfortably without dragging these defects to light: and as he had the good sense to keep his attention pretty closely confined to what he did understand, they were seldom brought into notice in any very conspicuous manner. Even such a man as Mr. Henley, however, with all his good sense and manliness, by the constant process of rising, may find himself at rather an inconvenient height. It might possibly have been so with him at the time when he first met with and observed my brother; for from that moment, he told my uncles, he conceived the notion that Martyn was exactly the young man he wanted as a kind of confidential assistant, or private secretary.

Here then was an opening. "Lucky fellow," said both my uncles. "That young man's fortune is made," said half the townspeople, when they knew that Martyn Bond, that handsome nephew of Mr. Russell's, was taken into the employment of Mr. Henley, and was to be associated with him in the great work of constructing some new docks, which he had then upon his hands.

I need scarcely say how my own mind was affected by this wonderful run of what is called good fortune, falling, as it seemed, at once at my brother's feet, altogether unsolicited and unlooked for. In fact, it came so rapidly, and one event so flattering to my brother was so soon followed by another still more so, that I sometimes felt as if we were both the subjects of some kind of enchantment, and dared scarcely rejoice so much as I otherwise should, from a sort of secret fear lest a sweep of the magic wand should in a moment scatter the glorious fabric into fragments around me. But no. There was no delusion, and Martyn, the

beloved of his mother's heart, the joy and the pride of mine, was standing, all godlike as it seemed to me, on a glorious horizon, with a golden future before him, in which I did not at this moment discern a single cloud. His fortune was made, everyone told me, and I was only too ready to believe it.

I had perhaps more reason on my side, than the excess of my exultation would seem to warrant. Had my brother had a splendid fortune left him, I should have felt very differently. Fear would then have effectually damped my joy. All that I had ever wished for him was a prosperous career in the kind of employment for which his talents and his turn of mind were fitted. Idleness and luxury I should always have dreaded for my brother: but here was honourable work, of a kind from which he could not flinch. Here was employment of a nature calculated to draw forth his highest talents and his best efforts. There could be no falling back upon dangerous self-indulgence here, because his very work would be enjoyment. Oh, how I did thank God, sometimes, upon my knees at the dead of night, for all His goodness to this beloved brother, now safe, I thought, from every temptation; now fairly engaged in a course which must issue in his happiness. Little indeed did I know at that time how much is needed to keep us really safe. Little did I know, either, of the wants and weakness of human nature, or the claims of that holiness without which no man can be either safe or happy.

If I had no fears for the future I am quite sure that my brother had none. Light, bounding, joyous, were the spirits with which he always seemed to be inspired. His very countenance became more beautiful, his bright eyes more brilliant; and his tall figure, elated with the dignity of success, became more graceful and more attractive in early manhood than it had been while he was but a boy. The most fastidious taste now marked all the arrangements of his dress. He was not effeminate, but certainly he was epicurean, for all seemed to tend to one end—enjoyment; and yet it was strictly that kind of enjoyment which submits what is most agreeable to self to the general approbation of others.

It is scarcely necessary to say that my brother became a great favourite amongst ladies, young and old; for towards

the latter he was always respectful and attentive. But, in fact, he was a favourite with all; and the highest delight of my life was to sit and listen to his praises, as I often did, when visitors called upon my aunt, and discussed the affairs of the town, its popular measures, its rising men, and all the different parties growing out of that brisk and social intercourse which makes half the business of a busy town.

In all this I had no misgiving about my brother—scarcely any drawback, for he was uniformly cordial and pleasant to me: he could well afford to be so at this period of his life. There was only one phase of his character which caused me some little inconvenience. He had still the trick of drawing upon my purse instead of his own, and mine was but very slenderly supplied; for my aunt was much more fond of making, now and then, a handsome present, unexpectedly, than of allowing any one to look to her for a regular supply. Thus, in the article of pocket-money, I was no better—scarcely so well off, as when at home; and yet Martyn used to come to me perpetually with his endless wants of linen and other things, all which he required of the most beautiful and costly fabric; and, without the slightest reference to his own salary, would say, almost as a matter of form, “Just get me so and so, and see to the making up.” I did purchase the articles, and I did see to the making up, but the latter part of the commission was generally performed by my own fingers, early in the morning, or late at night, up in a little sitting-room at the top of the house, which I was privileged to call my own.

All this labour on my part, and all this submission to injustice, I afterwards saw plainly, was as wrong as it was weak and foolish. It was, in fact, a continuance of that absurd system of ill-judged indulgence, which had been begun under my mother’s tender and partial rule, and by persisting in which we had made my brother both selfish and inconsiderate. It formed a part of the scrupulous delicacy which, up to this time, I had always exercised towards him, that I could not tell him plainly how unjust, how mean he really was, in receiving what I have no doubt was a very sufficient salary from his employer, and leaving me to pay for a considerable portion of his wardrobe.

And thus my poor brother was nursed up,—first a favourite, and then—but I must not anticipate. We saw no

dawnings, at this period of his life, of anything calculated to excite much alarm ; not even my aunt, who, as my father's sister, could not be expected to be very lenient towards human folly. It is true, she often called him an extravagant boy ; but I fancied, as she did this, that there shone out from her not very brilliant countenance a lurking smile of satisfaction at the *éclat* which Martyn's appearance, manners, and general style of life, were likely to obtain for him amongst the class of society with whom it was her wish that he should stand well. And I also found an excuse in his position for the difficulty which I imagined he found in supplying the many demands which such society must necessarily make upon so young a man. So we went on, according to our different methods, indulging, pampering, flattering him ; and so long as he acquitted himself well at table, knew how to dress, and was never at fault in general conversation, neither my uncle nor aunt troubled themselves much about my brother's character. They took it for granted all was right, so long as he was a credit to them. Woe betide him if the day should ever come when he would be a disgrace !

CHAPTER VI.

I HAVE said that my brother was a general favourite with ladies. How could he have been otherwise ! Handsome in his person, and most winning in his manners, he had besides that humorous turn which, when associated with delicate tact, can impart to the ordinary intercourse of society exactly the kind of zest it most wants. Half the people one meets with in society are a little weary of themselves ; some are *very* weary, and hence the person who can beguile them of this weariness, without costing them a single effort, is sure to become a favourite. •

With one individual, into whose company my brother was often thrown, this was more especially the case. Mr. Henley had a daughter, an only child, whose mother had died while she was but an infant. Irrational, as men in Mr. Henley's position generally are, in trying to avert from their children all the difficulties which they have themselves had

to encounter, and following out in this instance the dictates of a kind and liberal heart, the father had bestowed upon his daughter every indulgence which money could procure, and in her education every accomplishment which he thought the world would be likely to admire. In doing this he had not overlooked those farther precautions which he deemed most calculated for the happiness of his child. He had taught her, indirectly, that wealth is happiness; and she had learned her lesson so well, in spite of a little Sunday evening preaching, now and then, in his simple old-fashioned way, about all being vanity, that when a middle-aged gentleman, who kept his carriage and was known to be a man of splendid fortune, offered to take the brilliant little butterfly to flutter about his own elegant villa in the neighbourhood of London, there was evident satisfaction on the part of the father, and only a few pouting objections made by the girl, who either had no real heart to bestow, or up to this moment had never found out that she had one.

Under these interesting circumstances it was that my brother and I first made the acquaintance of Miss Henley, a handsome little brunette, with much of the character of an Eastern beauty in her countenance, her taste in dress, and in the general equipments both of her own person and her father's establishment. A strange contrast was presented by the unpretending habits of Mr. Henley and the gorgeous fancies of his capricious daughter: but nobody laughed, and very few presumed to call Miss Henley vulgar, because her father was a rising man. Vulgar, indeed, I scarcely think she was. To me it seemed rather that she inherited her father's natural refinement; but she had no experienced female friend to watch over the formation of her tastes and habits; and hence they took that superficial, showy, and luxurious turn which found indulgence in gorgeous embellishments of every kind, and an expenditure of money so lavish that every one said it was well she had caught the fancy of a man who was both old enough to restrain her, and rich enough not to be ruined.

I soon perceived that the caprices of this self-willed girl, her reckless extravagance, and her eagerness in securing anything and everything calculated to afford pleasure; above all, her undeniable beauty, were charming the fancy of my brother Martyn more than I had ever seen him charmed

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before. In vain I told him the girl was engaged. He scorned the pretensions of the old gentleman, and believed that, without a single farthing, he should be more acceptable himself. This was all very natural in one who looked only at the subject from one side; for to do the little beauty justice, she was an intolerable flirt; but my conviction was, that notwithstanding her marked preference for my brother, the real bait with which alone she was to be caught was a prospect of unbounded indulgence for the future.

My secret belief was, that Martyn did actually make the experiment of his own personal merits weighed in the balance against the old gentleman's wealth; and that he received such an answer as his audacity deserved. This, however, he never communicated to me; and even if such really was the case, the flirtation went on much as it had done before.

I do not think, generally speaking, that sisters have much charity for such affairs when carried on by their brothers. I know I was sufficiently piqued and annoyed that mine should be willing still to be classed amongst the admirers of one who would not sacrifice her golden prospects to become his wife. I wanted him to throw off his allegiance to the selfish beauty altogether: but he contented himself, as so many men do, by believing implicitly in a secret preference which the lady would not permit herself to avow, and thus he compounded with his heart for the indulgence of his vanity. Nay, he went further than this, and in his sentimental moods, which, by the way, were quite new to him, he wanted me to pity Miss Henley, as he did, for being a victim, a martyr, and many other deplorable things, all which I told him were pure matters of choice, and that even if she was a victim or a martyr it was at the shrine of her own sordid selfishness.

No wonder that my brother and I were very nearly having a serious quarrel on this subject. I saw plainly, too, that Mr. Henley was annoyed, and he had a right to be so; but as all folly must come to an end, so this had its legitimate conclusion in a splendid bridal in all respects worthy of the tastes and the circumstances of those who were most deeply interested in the display; and from what I saw on this occasion, I was fully convinced that the bride herself, instead of being a victim, as my brother supposed, was

really at the pinnacle of her highest ambition, in herself the admired of all beholders, in her will the mistress of a noble fortune.

Influenced, as there can be no doubt I was, by some feeling of prejudice against Miss Henley, I could not help being more favourably disposed towards her, when I saw how much she really felt at parting from her father. Indeed, Martyn would have it, that a great deal of her apparent cheerfulness and gaiety of manner was put on for the occasion. Perhaps it was; I did think there was real, heavy grief at her heart, when I saw her on the evening before her marriage, keeping her place close beside her father, whoever might come in, and not unfrequently resting with her white arm upon his shoulder, as she stood by his chair. It was a pretty sight, I must confess, for ever and anon the lightness and folly of her usual character seemed entirely to have forsaken her, while a deep, grave expression stole into her eyes; and once or twice, when she bent down her pretty head, with that graceful curve of the neck for which she was so remarkable, I thought, but I was not quite sure, that she was trying to conceal her tears.

When Martyn and I took leave, for we had only gone that evening as privileged and familiar friends, Miss Henley followed us down stairs. I thought she wished to speak with my brother alone, but I obstinately remained within hearing, for servants were passing to and fro, and I was determined there should be nothing for them to remark upon. Perhaps I might have been more confiding, for it seemed to be only some grave and earnest charge which Miss Henley wanted to repeat, and I distinctly heard her say, more than once, "Remember that in nothing can you oblige me more. You will be faithful in this; it is the last kindness I shall ever ask of you."

I suppose Martyn cried, or did something else equally appropriate; for all the way that we walked together he spoke not a word, but applied his handkerchief to his face pretty frequently, until at last, becoming quite angry, I said, rather abruptly, "What in the world does Miss Henley want you to do?"

Martyn, wholly absorbed in his own feelings, did not perceive in what spirit I asked this question, so that when about to separate, he held my hand rather more tenderly

than usual, and though we had been silent some time, answered me as if I had but that moment spoken. "Miss Henley," he said, "wishes me to be so gay to-morrow, that no one, and her father least of all, shall suspect the real state of my feelings."

"Pooh!" said I, "is that all?" and we parted without any more sympathising response from me.

I will not attempt to give any account of the festivities of the following day. It passed over, as such days usually do, with the largest amount of enjoyment falling to the share of those who are the least concerned in what is going on. There were many guests invited, and my brother and I were amongst the number. Martyn kept his word of promise to the bride with faithfulness worthy of a better cause. He was indeed the gayest of the gay; nor had I, for some time, the least idea that some portion of the merriment which he not only exhibited himself, but excited in others, was attributable to a cause which I had never, until the evening of that day, had reason to suspect.

Before I slept that night, however, a fearful truth had flashed upon me. Old recollections had been revived, and over the future, which had lately worn to me the bright colouring of golden promise, was hung a pall,—oh! how much darker than death!

It was in the midst of the gayest scene I had ever witnessed in my life, that this terrible revulsion of feeling came upon me. Seated in the room where dancing and music were going on, for I was but a sort of automaton there—a mere looker-on, and happening to be very near the door of the apartment, I heard a strange bustle which I could not account for, and very naturally turned my head to look. One glance was enough; I looked no more, I neither moved, nor saw—all my senses were concentrated in that of hearing. There was a kind of rush of gentlemen past me—they seemed to trample me down. I knew there was struggling with something, or somebody, in order to get some intruder thrust out of the room, and I could distinctly hear my brother Martyn's voice, yet not *like* his voice either, repeating again, and again, "I gave her my promise, and I will dance—the honour of a gentleman is pledged," with much more to the same effect, though scarcely articulate; and I knew afterwards, though I

scarcely think I could take note of it at the time, that there was tittering, and whispering, and half-suppressed laughter amongst both ladies and gentlemen all around me—yes, around *me*, sitting there like a condemned criminal, so solitary in that crowd, and so powerless that I dared not rise to walk out of the room, because I knew that I should fall if I did.

Indeed there was no possibility of escape, while the bustle continued, so I sat with my eyes fixed upon the ground, and I believe I was fast losing my consciousness, when all at once my senses were recalled by a figure placing itself directly between me and the door, so near to me that I could not have seen what was going on, even if I had tried.

"You are losing the wreath from your hair," said a kind voice in a half whisper. "May I be so bold as to fasten this rose?" I then felt that gentle hands were busy about my head, and that, under the plea of arranging some scattered flowers, a manly form was literally supporting me from falling; but who it was, I had no power to ask. A glass of water was next applied to my lips; and though I breathed again, and the room seemed no longer whirling round as it had done a moment before, still the figure maintained its place, close by my side, and directly between me and the door.

All this while the music and the dancing never ceased, though I heard neither; and soon the crowd near the door dispersed, and every one returned with undiminished zest to pursue the amusements of the evening. My friend now retreated a little, but did not entirely leave me; for, without appearing to have any knowledge of the nature or cause of my sudden indisposition, he now endeavoured to lead me into conversation on subjects so easy and familiar, that it scarcely cost me any effort to reply. Still I had never raised my eyes to his face, and did not in the least know to whom I was indebted for a kindness so delicate, and a sympathy so touching, that I could not even thank my unknown friend; for I felt that no ordinary expressions of gratitude would do justice to my feelings. At length he took a rose from a vase of flowers which stood close by, and, because it was the easiest thing to do, presented it to me. As I took the rose from his hand, I looked up for the first time. I tried to speak, but my lips quivered, and my voice failed me. The face

which bent over me was one I had never seen before. It was grave, but kind; and if the expression of my own, as I tried to give utterance to my feelings of gratitude, failed to convey the meaning with which my heart was full, I can only say that mine must have been the dumbest and most inexpressive of all human countenances.

It was but natural that I should mark the figure of this gentleman when he afterwards left me to mingle with the crowd. I had not observed him long, however, before I saw a delicate and graceful lady rise from her seat, and gently passing her hand within his arm, walk with him about the room, still leaning as none but a wife would have done, while they conversed together with different groups; and then, when the lady seated herself again, he sat beside her, carefully covering her fair shoulders with a shawl, which, while they walked, she had given him to carry for her, "as," I repeated again to myself, "none but a wife would have done."

It was nothing to me—it could be nothing, whether this gentleman was married or not. His kindness was the same, his sympathy lost none of its soothing; only there was a feeling attendant upon the discovery, that I was in some sort removed further from him, and could never claim his kindness again. This was another lesson, which it would have been well for me had I been more willing to learn; another lesson calculated to teach me, that I must serve instead of being served; that I must give and not receive.

After the great shock my feelings had sustained, and the miserable night I spent in consequence, the shame too which I felt in meeting any one, who I feared would remark upon my brother's conduct, it was very wonderful to me to find how few persons thought anything at all about the matter, and by those who did think, how lightly it was treated. Indeed almost every one found an excuse for him, in the state of his feelings on that particular occasion; and instead of blaming, they kindly pitied him. Others—and these I liked less—treated the whole matter as a joke; or if they moralized upon it at all, they only hoped the day would soon come when young Bond would be wiser. He was a "fine fellow," they said, "but young—very young. He would soon know the world better." And thus, amongst all who discussed the *accident* of that evening, there was not one

who regarded the subject in the serious light in which I had seen it, or who at all beheld in it those indications of a gloomy future which had overshadowed my own mind.

By degrees this gloom dispersed, even with me; for I thought these people who knew the world so well, must know better than I did; and besides my aunt had taught me to consider myself a sort of recluse, who had everything to learn from her, and from the society in which she moved. So I set down this among the rest, and tried to look at the spectacle of my brother, as I had seen him in one momentary glance, as a sort of exaggerated dream, partly the result of my own false estimate of the world and its ways.

I suppose Martyn would have treated my impressions in the same light manner, had I ever spoken of them to him; or, it is quite possible, he did not fully understand what had taken place; however this might be, the subject was never touched upon between us. I believe it is an infallible rule amongst the nearest and dearest friends, that such subjects never are mentioned until the time to do so with any hope of benefit has passed by. I know, in my own case, there were many occasions when I would gladly have begun it, when I had previously formed a plan to do so, in the least offensive manner; but whenever I looked into my brother's face, he struck me as appearing so unlikely to do anything disgraceful, as being at once so gentlemanly, pure, and high-minded, that I could not command sufficient resolution to bring against him a charge of so disgusting and offensive a nature. On such occasions I told my beating heart to be still, for the error had only once occurred,—it was on a very particular occasion,—there was no probability whatever that it ever would occur again. In fact, my brother seemed rather sobered, and altogether improved in character since the marriage of Miss Henley. He attended more constantly to business, and it was not improbable I thought, that the very fact of some dim recollection of the manner in which he had committed himself, might have really done him good, by putting him more upon his guard, and showing him more clearly than he had ever seen it before, the necessity of attending to the claims of duty before those of pleasure.

With the comfort derived from these reflections, I was not long in regaining my usual composure of mind. It is

true that I became at this period of my life, again haunted by the image of that unfortunate man, who had been our visitor on the evening of the memorable Christmas-day; but Martyn was rising—still rising in the good opinion of all who knew him; he was becoming more than ever a man of importance, even beyond his years, in the world of business; not only my uncle and aunt, but all their visitors, were evidently more and more pleased with him: so why should I—"old croaker" as he often called me, not join in the universal rejoicing over his happy fortunes? I did so perhaps in a deeper and more ardent manner, than any one gave me credit for. I did so with the first dawning of each morning, when I prayed to his God and mine to bless him through the day: I did so in the silence of the solemn night, when I knelt in my solitary chamber, and poured forth the gratitude of my full heart to the Father of Mercies.

CHAPTER VII.

WITH regard to my brother's general conduct, I do not think he was ever more upon his guard than about this time, or at all events more free from blame; for at those times when we move on most innocently before the eyes of the world, we are often exercising but little care; while, on the other hand, a great amount of care does not always secure us from incurring blame. At this period of his life, I ought then to say, my brother enjoyed the confidence and the good opinion of all with whom he associated. If there were any exceptions, I was ignorant of the fact; and, pleased as I always was to think well of him myself, as well as to see him thought well of by others, the vision of that unfortunate evening passed away from my thoughts, and I gloried again in my brother even more than I had ever done before.

I had indeed some cause to do so. There were difficulties connected with the great business of constructing the docks, for which even Mr. Henley had not been prepared. Various interests were at stake, and consequently strong parties arose out of measures which had nothing to promise to any,

but a large amount of public good. For contests and rivalries of this kind, the clear-headed, hard-working engineer was not so well qualified as for loss and profit calculations; and my brother did him good service here: for besides conciliating all with whom he was brought into contact, so far as they could be conciliated while smarting under a sense of individual injury, Martyn adopted another and a most unexpected expedient, for convincing the whole town that the thing absolutely must be done, and could be done too, without any great amount of personal sacrifice on the part of any individual.

Martyn Bond wrote a pamphlet addressed to the inhabitants of the town of B——, and though it appeared with no name, the discovery of the real author was soon made; everyone knew that Mr. Henley could not have written it—there was but one other individual who understood the subject well enough, and that was my brother.

It is more easy to imagine than for me to describe my feelings on this occasion. I had observed that my brother was unusually absorbed, and I knew that he had a large amount of natural talent; but I had no idea that he was absorbed with any subject half so grave and useful, and still less that he could throw into writing so large an amount of business knowledge. It was pretty evident from the style of expression, that the pamphlet was written by a juvenile hand; but the sense was strong and clear, the ingenuity undeniable, and the whole tone of language and style of argument such as no gentleman need have wished to disown.

When parties run high in any place where local interests occupy the chief attention of the public, it is not difficult to write a prodigiously popular book on the leading topic of the day. It was so in the busy town of B——; and on a sudden my brother became exalted to the position of an author, in addition to his former dignity as a gentleman and a man of business. I must say for him, that he bore his blushing honours well. On all such occasions he had the self-possession not to appear too much elated, whatever his secret exultation might be; and this feature of his character was the foundation of some of my highest hopes respecting him. If he could so perfectly command himself here, why not elsewhere? I could see that the usages of

society all helped him here; while on that point respecting which there was the most to fear, the influence of society was entirely against him.

This then was a proud and happy time for me, whatever it was for my brother. I saw by his flashing eye, when he told me of any unexpected proof of high esteem, how much he felt, though he would not allow such feeling to escape in words; and I thought too, as we walked together through the streets, that he trod with a lighter step, and carried his head with a prouder elevation.

This pamphlet of my brother's had the astonishing effect of making so many converts to Mr. Henley's views, and so many supporters of his plans, that the opposing party, seeing the folly of any longer holding out after so great a reduction of their numbers, wisely gave the matter up, and universal cordiality once more reigned throughout the busy town.

It behoved the town to be grateful. Public gratitude can only express itself by the manly voice, and men must dine. A dinner, therefore—a public dinner, was given expressly in honour of my brother, though jointly with Mr. Henley; and Martyn must prepare for this new and unexpected mark of distinction. For himself, nothing could be more easy than to prepare for pleasure at any time, and almost in any way; and if, as I suggested, he would have to make a speech, he was master of a ready flow of language, which on ordinary occasions had never deserted him, and we had no fear that it would desert him now, on the first important occasion of his whole life. Mr. Henley was no speaker, so Martyn said he should have to do double duty; and we talked the subject over, amusing ourselves with calculating who would be present, how different persons would acquit themselves, some scarcely able to conceal their chagrin, with many other exciting anticipations, in all which there blended no shadow of fear that the conclusion of the feast would not be as honourable to all parties as its commencement.

But I will not attempt to describe the day itself. It came and passed like other days. I sate alone through the greatest portion of it, restless and excited, but so happy that I liked best to be alone, because there was none to share that happiness with me to the full extent to which I

felt it. My aunt was as much pleased as she was capable of being with Martyn's success; but her views of life in general were not the most exhilarating; and even when her husband dined out, correct man as he was, she always tormented herself first, and then she tormented him, about the headache of the next day. So I sate in my room through the greater portion of the evening, finding it more pleasant to indulge my happy thoughts alone. I could not have retired to rest on any account before my uncle's return; for though I never ventured to attack him with questions, I hoped and believed it would be impossible for me not to gather something from him relating to the great subject of the day.

Mr. Russell returned home rather earlier than I expected. I heard his carriage enter the court-yard, and ran down that I might be in the drawing-room when he came. My aunt had retired an hour before, and I was alone when my uncle walked into the room. From the first glance I ventured to direct to his countenance, I saw that he looked dissatisfied; but this he often did when a dinner had not been to his liking. One of the servants, too, was busy in the room, and he seldom spoke before them. All that he did, however, even to the taking off his gloves, was done with an air of annoyance, almost of disgust, and I began to think the dinner must have been very badly cooked indeed.

At last we were left alone, and then my uncle spoke.

"That brother of yours," he said, "is a sad fool, after all!"

I started. What could he have done? Oh! the speech! he had broken down, no doubt; and so sure did I feel of this being the point upon which he had failed, that I ventured to say my brother was very young, and no one could be expected to speak well at first.

"Speak?" said my uncle sharply, "he spoke well enough."

"What then has Martyn done?" I asked very timidly.

"Made a fool of himself, I tell you," said my uncle, while he thrust his feet into his slippers in no very gentle manner, and then, without another word of explanation, took up his candle and walked off to bed.

It seemed strange to me afterwards that the truth did not flash upon me; but no suspicion at the time was

suggested by what my uncle said. I still thought the conversation, as well as the dinner, had not pleased him ; that my brother had probably adhered to some opinion, or carried on some argument, in opposition to him ; and though somewhat disappointed and disturbed, I doubted not but the morning would dispel the dark clouds which had gathered on my uncle's brow.

All that night an uncomfortable sensation haunted both my sleeping and my waking thoughts to a degree quite beyond what the occasion seemed to warrant ; for Mr. Russell was by no means the smoothest-tempered man in the world, and those who tried most to please him, occasionally failed. I awoke in the morning unrefreshed, and still the same strange and undefined apprehension remained with me, so that I was almost afraid to meet my aunt, and when I did so, found myself trembling under the sensation that some storm was gathering over my head.

No storm, however, came that day, nor any explanation. I thought I could perceive that the ladies who called upon my aunt, if in earnest conversation with her, lowered their voices as I entered the room, or suddenly became silent, as people do who come to a stop with one subject of conversation, and are unprovided with another ; but that day, and some others passed over, and I still remained in ignorance of the nature of my brother's offence, for I was determined not to ask what it was.

Martyn himself did not come near us, though he seldom kept away for more than two or three days. I took it for granted he was more than usually busy about the commencement of the great works, which were now in a fair way for being carried out ; but when a whole week had passed over without my seeing him, and what was very remarkable, without hearing his name mentioned in my uncle's house, I thought I would go and see for myself if he was ill, or if anything particular had happened to him ; and making some excuse for calling at Mr. Henley's office, I ventured to ask that gentleman himself if I could see my brother for a few minutes.

Mr. Henley was busy as usual, and at first when I spoke to him, he merely gave orders to one of his clerks to let Mr. Bond know that he was wanted ; but as if suddenly recollecting something, he called the clerk back, and then,

closing the door of his own apartment in the office, placed a chair for me near the fire, and begged I would sit down.

I must confess this looked rather formidable, but there was always something kind and friendly in Mr. Henley's manner; and I had become so accustomed to hear him speak favourably of my brother, that I felt in very little fear of him, and greatly preferred, if there was anything painful to be told, that it should come from his lips rather than my uncle's.

First of all, before he began to speak, Mr. Henley stirred the fire, though it did not want stirring; then he sat down, rubbed his hands, and said the air was cold, though I thought it exceedingly close. Then he asked me if I had seen my brother lately.

I said "No; I supposed he was very busy."

"Yes," said the gentleman; "we shall have a good deal to do now. You have not seen your brother, I think you say?"

"No, not since the dinner."

"Well," said Mr. Henley, with a kind of laugh which scarcely was a laugh, though intended for one, "he's a good deal disfigured—"

"Disfigured?" I exclaimed, now beginning to be greatly alarmed.

"Oh, don't alarm yourself," said he. "Young gentlemen will be foolish sometimes. It was almost too much for him; a time of great excitement, you know. We must overlook these things."

"I don't know at all what you mean," I said.

"I dare say not. We don't talk of these matters to ladies."

"But I am his sister, you know, sir. Do pray tell me what has happened."

"It is because you are his sister that I wanted just a word or two with you on this subject—his only sister, I think, and older I should say—a little older?"

"A great deal older; three years at least."

"Ah, yes. I should have thought so."

"But, my dear sir, what *has* happened?"

"Why just nothing at all in another person's case; but I feel a little more interest than usual in your brother, Miss Bond."

"And I thank you from my heart for this interest. I hope Martyn—"

"Well, if you must know, there was rather an awkward termination to the affair of the dinner on his part. Your brother, Miss Bond, would do well to be moderate. In fact, he is not able to take much wine; and I suppose he must have fallen, or something of that kind. At all events, his face is so grazed, and the swelling at first was so disfiguring, that he was obliged to keep his room; and I don't think he would have been here now, but that I really cannot dispense with his services."

"Do you know where he fell?"

"Ladies, Miss Bond, should not inquire into these matters, too closely. I tell you moderation is more necessary for your brother than you may be aware of."

"And did all the company know?"

"They could not help it. He has no command over himself at all, when too much excited; and if I may venture to say so to you, was about as foolish as any man could make himself. They were some of them trying to get him out of the room, and I think he must have fallen against the back of a chair, or something of that kind."

"And do you think my poor brother is quite disgraced, then, in the opinion of all who were present?"

"Nothing of the kind. It was pure accident, in great part owing to previous excitement; and but for the unfortunate disfigurement of his face, the thing would have blown over by this time."

"Perhaps even that may do him good."

"Perhaps it may. He is a fine youth, I must confess, and gives me great satisfaction, Miss Bond; that is, when he works. When he really *will work*, there is no one to beat him. I have scarcely ever met with a more promising young man. But you must keep him temperate, Miss Bond. That is the reason why I detained you, because I have a high idea of female influence, and I think your brother wants a friend."

"If I were in his place, I would never drink another glass of wine through the whole course of my life."

"Pshaw! nonsense. There is no use in going to extremes. To be temperate is all your brother needs. I should not like to see him singular."

"He had surely better be singular than wicked."

"You are severe, Miss Bond. I had hoped to find in you one who would treat a brother with tenderness."

"Oh! Mr. Henley, you do not know me, or you would not say that. It is the very love I bear my brother which makes me so wretched when he does wrong."

"Well, well. Perhaps you are right there. But after all, we must exercise charity, you know. I suppose ladies see these matters in a stronger light than we do. But don't, Miss Bond, don't, if you would be advised by me, speak harshly to your brother."

"You need not fear me, I think?"

"And don't talk to him about adopting any extreme measure. It does not answer, I can assure you. Gentlemen don't like it. It won't do, Miss Bond. Talk to your brother kindly and reasonably. He'll be all right in a day or two. He must still take his wine, but it must be just a little less. That's all."

And as Mr. Henley said this, he showed, by his manner of rising and returning to his books, that he considered the conversation at an end; so I rose also, and asking for a slip of paper, I left just a line for my brother, requesting him to join me at a place where we had often met, and to walk home with me; but I took good care that the time I fixed should be when the day had so far closed, that it would not be at all necessary for me to see his face or features too distinctly.

Martyn was at the place of appointment. I think he was glad of the opportunity of talking with me, and perhaps he was not the less glad that our walk was in the dark.

I slipped my arm quietly within his, and such were the feelings which his presence always excited, that I involuntarily pressed his arm closely and tenderly, as if to assure him that whatever had transpired, I, at all events, was in no degree estranged from him.

To my great surprise, Martyn, sensible of my meaning, took my hand kindly in his, and we both walked some time in silence, for I felt a choking in my throat which threatened to betray me, if I should attempt to speak. At last, by a sudden impulse, I said, "Martyn dear, you won't take too much wine again, will you?"

"No," he answered immediately, in a firm and determined voice; "No, Pattie, that I never will, as long as I live. I

know how much I *can* take now, and I pledge you my honour that I never will go beyond."

I pressed his arm again, but spoke not. What could I say? I knew he was perfectly sincere—what could I wish for more? Mr. Henley, my uncle, every one I knew, would have told me this was enough, and I tried to think so too; so when we parted at my uncle's garden gate, which I took care that we should, in order that Martyn's poor disfigured face might not be brought into the light of the hall, I ran up into my own room, with my heart full of affection for my brother, and of gratitude to God; and if I was not quite confident for the future, I am sure it was from no doubt of the rectitude and sincerity of my brother's intentions.

The one thing which I feared more than all else for myself was that my uncle and aunt should open upon me, regarding Martyn with that severity which they were quite capable of exercising both in acts and words, towards any one who particularly displeased them. But they spared me this time, and my brother too; for before many weeks had passed over, he was again reinstated at their table, apparently as welcome a guest as ever. I learned, afterwards, that this forbearance was owing to the kind interference of Mr. Henley, who, not only palliated Martyn's fault by every argument he could bring forward, but plainly showed them that his interests in life would be seriously injured by the loss of their countenance and favour; and that, more especially, at a time when so honourable and lucrative a course was just opening before him.

Knowing, as I did, how much Mr. Russell had been mortified and annoyed by what had transpired, and perceiving in his manner towards my brother, notwithstanding all his ordinary expressions of cordiality, strong indications of considerable alienation of feeling, mixed with unfavourable suspicions, I could not but wonder that he should again bring him forward exactly on the same terms as before; that he should carry on before him exactly the same kind of remarks in relation to the pleasures of the table; that he should press him as much as ever to take wine, and in all respects hold up before him the same standard of hospitality, good fellowship, and gentlemanly conviviality. Notwithstanding all this, however, I never saw or heard that

Martyn transgressed the generally prescribed limits of decorum. Indeed, at my uncle's table it was not very likely that he should; for the test of a true gentleman, in my uncle's opinion, and in the school to which he belonged, was that a man should know when to stop, and should possess sufficient command over himself to do so at the right moment. If any man failed in this, why, he was not a gentleman, that was all, and must expect to be expelled from society.

Provided all Mr. Russell's guests, then, were perfectly self-possessed, cool, deliberate, and safe from temptations within, they might resist, with great ease and certainty, all that was likely at his table to reach them from without. No one was guilty of excess there. It was the last place in which any one could have committed a breach of decorum. Up to a certain point, however, all was indulgence of appetite, and taste. The best wines, the most luxurious viands, were not only enjoyed in reality, but discussed, and descanted upon, as if man might live, most properly and lawfully to eat and drink, provided he did both genteelly.

Up to a certain point, then, all was right, under certain restrictions, all was safe, according to the philosophy of my uncle's household. I never heard that either he, or any of his guests, could specify exactly where that point was; nor lay down a rule of restrictions calculated to apply to any great variety of cases.

CHAPTER VIII.

MARTYN BOND was now closely engaged in a kind of employment exactly suited to his taste and turn of mind; and though there were no more pamphlets written by him, and no more great dinners given either to him or his employer, they were both steadily gaining the confidence of those who had once opposed their plans, and as steadily maintaining a safe place in the esteem of all.

I do not know that my brother, throughout the long course of this great public work, ever committed himself

openly in the way which his friends at one time so much feared. My uncle thought he had now discovered the exact point up to which it was safe to go, and sometimes commended him warmly for stopping there. I rather think my brother also considered himself to have made this discovery. That he knew his danger I have no doubt; but he believed his enemy brought under his own power, and he exulted in the victory, and indulged himself accordingly.

That his enemy was still there, besetting his secret path, and assailing his private hours, I knew too well. Accidentally I knew it. There were facts, of which he never dreamed, that revealed the truth to me; and though I let my uncle and the world go on commending him for having attained that true mastery over himself which marks the gentleman, I often shuddered as I listened to their praises, and grounded my worst fears upon the very foundation which supplied them with hope; it was that habit had now become so far confirmed, as to enable him to do as other gentlemen did without committing himself.

I now learned—ah! and what a school is that to learn in!—I learned to detect such symptoms as others passed unheeded. They did not look with my eyes, or they would often have seen that early in the morning poor Martyn had fortified himself against the cold, and against the bad air. Against anything and everything, and at all hours of the day and night, he seemed to consider that he required to be fortified. It is true he had much rough work to do. Mr. Henley never spared himself, and consequently none whom he employed. Martyn had to superintend and direct the workmen through the whole of a cold wet spring, for the operations commenced early in the year; and the principal excavations being close upon the outskirts of the town, there was the opening out of old drains, sluices, and many unwholesome things to be encountered, all which Mr. Henley believed it impossible to endure with safety, unless fortified in the manner most agreeable to the generality of workmen.

I believe that no man could have been a stronger advocate for temperance, or a more sincere one than Mr. Henley, partly because he had himself so little temptation to be otherwise than moderate in all things, that it seemed to him the most easy matter in the world to be so. The two vices of idleness and excess he always classed together.

Work was his sovereign remedy for evil. I am not at all sure, if his ideas could have been made to extend so far away from present things, but he would have argued that if Eve had only had enough to do, she would never have been tempted to taste the forbidden fruit. I knew also that work was good for everyone, and especially good for my brother; but I knew too, that we may make a fearful mistake by esteeming work above the thing worked for, and so placing the means before the end. My brother had the work—so far so good. But his was a nature which could only have been rendered worthy of itself by early moral training, such as we were total strangers to. A mother, trained herself, could have done for Martyn all that he required in the way of human instrumentality;—our poor mother had only loved him!

Besides the painful apprehension which I had some cause for entertaining for my brother, he was not at this period of his life so communicative or so kind to me, as had previously been his habit. Sometimes I excused him on the ground of his arduous and incessant occupations. He was too tired, I thought, to walk with me, and too busy to meet me when I joined a party. He still dined at my uncle's occasionally, but when I saw him there, it was always in other company, and we sometimes scarcely exchanged half-a-dozen sentences. It might, I thought, be a mere fancy of mine, but it seemed as if he shunned me, as if he did not wish me to penetrate into his real life, or to ask questions concerning his mode of spending his time.

But all these suspicions and surmises, however painful they might be, were closely locked within my own breast: and I still listened with pleasure when I heard my brother praised, though in my secret soul I believed the time was not far distant when such praises would be more sparingly bestowed.

While this state of things continued, the great business of the docks was completed. Mr. Henley was believed to have executed this important work altogether in a style which could not have been surpassed by any man in the kingdom, and to Martyn Bond was awarded his full share of commendation. Again the town must express its gratitude, again there must be a dinner, again my poor brother committed himself. And then it came out, first from one

quarter, and then another, that his private habits were not what they ought to be. Some who had appeared to be his best friends now winked and smiled, and insinuated what they called funny things about him. Others expressed their disappointment in the young man, with broader evidence of disapprobation. Amongst these were Mr. and Mrs. Russell. They were not persons to suffer being twice disgraced. Martyn was forbidden their house, and by way of relieving her indignant feelings, my aunt poured upon my head the full measure of her disgust and irritation.

I confess this was at times a little more than I knew how to bear, for sorrow does not always make us patient; and when my aunt first burst upon me, on returning from a visit where she had been hearing a sad story about Martyn, I could not help attempting to ward off her heavy blows in a manner not, strictly speaking, entirely confined to the defensive.

Her first words so shocked me, that I might almost have been pardoned for a momentary absence of respect in my manner. Almost before she had entered the room, and certainly before the servant who carried her shawl had retreated, Mrs. Russell exclaimed "It seems, after all then, Martha, your brother is a drunkard."

"What do you mean, aunt?" I asked.

"I mean that he drinks—Martyn Bond—your brother."

"I am not at all sure he does that more than others."

"What do *you* mean? It is my turn to ask now."

"I mean that gentlemen who dine here, and everywhere, take just as much wine as Martyn does, and sometimes a little more."

"Martha, take care what you say. I think you are forgetting your proper place, when you presume to censure the mode in which this house is conducted."

"I censured nobody; I only wanted to excuse my brother; because, if he be so very wrong, I cannot see how all these gentlemen are right; and if they are right, I cannot see how poor Martyn is so very wrong."

"He *is* wrong, I can tell you, and very wrong too. I cannot express to you how vexed I feel that we ever introduced him here."

"Is Mr. Henley set against him, too, do you think?"

"Mr. Henley himself told your uncle he would give him a

hundred a year more than he does now, if he could be quite sure he would be always sober."

"Aunt, there is but one way, I believe, and Martyn must be encouraged in that. He must leave off taking anything of the kind."

"How absurd you are, child! I see no merit in that way, whatever."

"No merit, certainly, but great safety."

"And a pretty simpleton you would have your brother make of himself. No, no. He must be moderate, not extreme. The only virtue I hold by, in such matters, is the virtue of moderation."

"Yes, but if a person is so constituted, and so trained by habit, that he is not able to be moderate?"

"Then he must find his proper place, and sink to his just level."

"And be lost eternally?"

"Dear me, Martha! what dreadful language you make use of. I begin to think Martyn and you must have been very strangely brought up; and that your father had some reason on his side when he told me he had only one child who gave him perfect satisfaction."

"We were brought up by the kindest of mothers. That is all I wish to remember about our bringing up."

"Kindest? yes. I dare say she was kind enough, poor thing, but—"

"But what? If you have anything to say against my mother, I am sure you can never have known her."

"Against her? Oh! I don't want to say anything against her or against any one who is dead; but we all knew how she tried my poor brother."

"She try anybody! my mother, do you say?"

"You are so violent and so rude, Martha, one cannot talk to you."

"You may talk to me in any way you please, only don't speak against my mother."

"I have nothing to say against her, except that she used to take more than was good for her."

"My mother!"

"Yes; did you never observe that, yourself, when old Jane and she pretended she was ill, and she took to her bed?"

"Aunt! this is too horrible. I cannot bear it. I am not a child, nor a slave, that I should be forced to bear it."

"Bless me! how grand we are to-day!"

"This is too bad. You first stab me with your horrid words, and then you taunt, and mock me. I have enough to bear without this, heaven knows!"

"Come, child, be reasonable. What is the use of crying and making a fright of yourself, just before dinner, too. Have you seen after the grapes your uncle spoke of? And the lamp? Has Thomas trimmed it properly, do you think? Really such people do nothing without being looked after. There, Martha, go up to your own room, wash your eyes with cold water, and make all right as quickly as possible. I don't feel at all well to-day. I wonder people can worry me so. I do believe I should have fainted at Mrs. Dacon's, if she had not led me away into her own room, and kindly got me something to take."

It is perhaps scarcely necessary to say, with what bitter weeping I left the presence of my aunt, while she still expatiated upon the kindness of Mrs. Dacon, and the benefit of having something to take on the occasion of feeling faint. If ever an excuse for this habit could reasonably have been made for any one, I do think it might in my poor mother's case; but in spite of the coarse remarks which had just wounded me so deeply, I did not, and do not now, believe that my precious mother was guilty of excess; at any rate not to any greater extent than Mrs. Russell herself. It was easy for a bitter tongue to make out a case against her: and there was no one now to do her justice, by refuting the charge. So long as the habits of society remain unchanged, there will be other sad-hearted women besides my mother, who, in their seasons of poignant suffering, will find, as they believe, a legitimate resource in this temporary alleviation. To what extent it shall be applied, they are not likely to be well able to decide, when they cast themselves and their sorrows upon some dark untended couch, over which no kind eye bends down to pity them, nor smile comes near to bring them light, nor helping hand supports their drooping head, nor any voice speaks words of comfort, except that sometimes the well-remembered tones of childhood's home, come floating back in dreams, making the wakeful silence of desertion only more desolate.

abated, leaving us only one difficulty to contend with—that of restoring his exhausted strength without exciting the brain so as to occasion a relapse. Of course no stimulants were thought of now. I know not what the doctor might have prescribed in another case, but he never hinted such a thing to me; and as if by tacit consent, the subject was not named between us.

So soon as my brother was able to recognise and speak to me, I gladly dismissed the nurse, for though the necessity for incessant watchfulness and care was scarcely diminished, my pecuniary resources had sunk so low that I found I must economise in every quarter where it was practicable. One hope still remained to keep me from absolute despair about the means of supplying our future necessities—indulgences I did not dare to think of. It was that some portion of my brother's salary might still be due; and in a short time this hope was most agreeably confirmed.

Mr. Henley might be severe—he had good cause for being so—but it was not in his nature to be mean. I have no doubt but his first inquiry into the disaster of the flood had called forth very exaggerated statements with regard to my brother's neglect and general delinquency. Such was a natural and inevitable consequence of what had transpired; at the same time that his own dismay and disappointment would quite as naturally induce a credulous leaning to the same side; for while we suffer innocently ourselves, it seems to be only a reasonable compliance with the demands of justice to throw blame upon some one, and those who are but half guilty are in this way too often more than doubly condemned.

Mr. Henley had not a heart to follow up any system of revenge, however great his own grievance might be. He had no bitterness in his nature; and Peterson too, I believed, was one who would do my brother ample justice. Thus, in all probability, as public feeling began to abate, and as the whole matter resolved itself more into an accident of weather than of man's neglect or culpability; perhaps also in consequence of some palliatives thrown in by the kind doctor, Mr. Henley grew in time to regard my brother's conduct with less asperity. At all events, he began to pity him; and then awoke the desire to do him justice, even more than justice, for in addition to a small portion of Martyn's

both in meeting; but I became at last more cheerful, and more bold, as days grew into weeks, and the subject of my brother's shame began to be forgotten.

I thought, sometimes, I should like to talk to Mr. Henley again about him; but had no specific reason for requesting an interview; when, one morning, to my great surprise, a note from that gentleman was put into my hand, in which he expressed a wish to see me, and, so far as it might suit my convenience, he even fixed the very day and hour. The meeting was to be at his own house, for, as he stated in the note, he was not anxious the subject of our conversation should transpire.

My heart beat almost audibly as I read this note, for the style of expression afforded me no clue as to whether the cause of its being written was disastrous, or hopeful. Oh! if those who write could sometimes know how much may hang upon the slight turn of one simple expression! In conversation we look into the eyes of the speaker, and watch the motion of the lips; besides which, there is the voice, that true index of the emotions of the heart. But the cold, silent transcript of a written communication conveys no such intelligence, and we gaze into the sharp blue ink, written with steel upon the blank white ground, and nothing comes of it, but the same, harsh, icy, and unyielding characters, from which all the entreaties we would offer cannot wring out a single meaning more.

It is needless to say with what punctuality I obeyed this summons. I think my look and manner must have betrayed the agitation of my feelings, as I entered Mr. Henley's private room, where I found him so intent upon a pile of papers, sorting, and selecting, that he scarcely noticed me at first; but when he did look up, seeing, perhaps, my cold, white, shivering countenance, he laid the papers down at once, and, coming forward, took hold of both my hands, and led me to a seat. I could have borne a harsh reception with more composure than this, for there are states of mind when nothing is so overpowering as unexpected kindness. But still I mastered my feelings so far as to say, "Is anything wrong? Do tell me at once."

"Oh no," said Mr. Henley, quite promptly, and cheerfully; "let us draw to the fire a few minutes. Let me see," and he looked at his watch; "I have just a quarter of an

hour, not a moment more, so I will go to business at once. Your brother, Miss Bond ——"

"Yes, sir; what of him?"

"You perhaps remember a conversation we once had on this subject?"

"Perfectly."

"And that I then thought your views regarding him a little extreme, and severe?"

"I do."

"Well, then, I must tell you that I think I have come round to your opinion."

"Oh, sir, you make me too happy."

"Wait a minute. Will you assist me if I try to bring your brother to the same way of thinking? But, indeed, I need scarcely ask you to do that."

"You know how earnestly I will do my part; but you must pardon me, sir, if I say, that in a case like my brother's, it is a man and a gentleman by whom this great good must be effected. I may persuade, but it is for you alone to convince, to enforce, and to strengthen."

"I understand. Perhaps you mean more, though; perhaps you mean that I must make the same vow, and bind myself down in the same way?"

"I should not dare to say that, not even to think it."

"No, no, I hope you are not so requiring as that. I believe you to be a just and reasonable young lady, Miss Bond, or I should not have sent for you now. What I want especially to tell you is this, I am likely to be called away for some weeks. There is a project for some great public works in Belgium, and I am appointed one of the judges to decide upon the merits of different plans for carrying them out. Now I have been thinking who I could leave behind me in charge of this business at home; and I know of no one so capable as my young friend, Mr. Bond."

"Dear sir, could you trust him?"

"So far as ability goes I could trust him implicitly. He has talents beyond his years, and he manages the men, too, which is a great matter."

"But I thought the docks were finished?"

"So they are, and yet—but I cannot explain it to you; nor would you understand me if I tried. To make the matter short, there is a great deal to be done yet before we

of my recital might be more serious than I had at first anticipated. But he braved it all; I flinched from nothing, except the scenes of horror connected with the flood, and especially the dead child; and I had the great satisfaction of seeing my brother, that same evening, restored to a degree of patient composure, which to his impetuous nature was as strange as it was delightful to me to contemplate.

There was now no dark secret betwixt us,—nothing to conceal. I think we were more to each other just at this time than ever in our lives before. Martyn from his very weakness was dependent as a child upon me, and me alone: while I, like a fond mother, clung to him the more tenderly because of the long nights of weariness and days of sorrow which he had caused me to endure.

It had not been any part of my plan to tell of the last instance of Mr. Henley's kindness, at the same time that I told of the disaster and of my brother's consequent dismissal. I believed the moral lesson would be better taught by calm consideration of the whole series of events which preceded this act of kindness. I therefore reserved the pleasant intelligence until some future period, when his sinking spirits, or his softened feelings, might need especially the application of such a solace; though it may well be understood how strong was the temptation, while I saw him suffer, to tell all,—the bitter first, and then the sweet. I never forgot, however, that my brother had been in some measure committed to my care; and even without the solemn injunction of a dying mother, I could not have withheld any portion of that affectionate solicitude which pointed onwards to his future good, and could not rest satisfied only with present comfort.

CHAPTER XII.

THERE was urgent need for my brother and me to be much to each other just at this time, for beyond the doctor, whose visits were as frequent and as regular as ever, it seemed as if the whole world had forgotten us. My uncle and aunt Russell sent once or twice, in a formal kind of way, to inquire after Martyn, but they neither of them

felt the ground beneath my tread. I believe my aunt had some suspicions of my sanity, or of my sobriety, for I laughed and chatted with all the guests that day, as if the whole world had been one scene of sunshine and delight. So much for a bright hope bursting forth upon the noon of a dark day.

CHAPTER IX.

A FEW days after my interview with Mr. Henley, I received from him a kind and encouraging note, in which he informed me, that the business had been settled with my brother and to his entire satisfaction. Indeed he had found, he said, much less difficulty than he had anticipated, and was exceedingly glad to be assured by his young friend, that the sacrifice he asked was one of no importance whatever; that he had really less pleasure in the indulgence than had been imagined, and could, with perfect ease, do either with, or without it. "I am very glad of this," he added, in his kind simple way, "because I should not like to be hard upon the young man. My mind is now perfectly at ease, and I shall leave home with the full conviction that our business cannot be in better hands. In fact, there is nothing difficult to be done, nothing required but industry and watchfulness. My own man, Peterson, would be all-sufficient, if other people would think so, and if the men would work under him. Your brother must be often reminded, however, that great watchfulness is necessary, especially on the breaking up of a frost, which might occasion some loosening of the new bank, or any other stress of weather likely to arise during my absence. Watchfulness, therefore, is my parting word, and to be often on the spot; for there is nothing like the master's presence for keeping the men to their duty. I write thus fully to you, for though ladies in general cannot be supposed to understand much of such matters, I believe you have great influence with your brother."

Such was the tenor of Mr. Henley's letter, and such the confiding hope with which, when all was arranged, he finally left the country, intending to be absent about two months.

It must be remembered that, up to this time, he had seen only the best, the most manly part of my brother's character; and also, that in himself, he was as little studious of human character in general, as a man of sense could be. The objects of his study consisted of pure business matters, such as embankments, breakwaters, and docks, as we have seen; the fall of water to its own level, and all that variety of details included in what has become almost a new science, such as drainage, sewerage, &c. So far as the intellectual nature of man could be made, under his management, to subserve these purposes, he looked well into it, and understood it, too; but beyond this, especially if reaching upwards to the moral nature of man, he was simple as a child; only that occasionally, his natural shrewdness being directed that way, as in the present position of my brother, he could see as well as other men, and better than many, what was necessary to the carrying out successfully of any business that he had in hand.

The frank and friendly letter of Mr. Henley, with the arrangements to which my brother had been induced to submit, so filled my heart with happiness, at this time, that I found strength enough, and patience more than enough, to retain my position at my uncle Russell's, and consequently to endure all the comments they might please to make upon my brother, and upon what they called the blind confidence of his employer.

For some little time after Mr. Henley's departure, I did not go to see Martyn. I thought he would be very busy, and having always felt, within myself, a great objection to having any new resolution brought prematurely to light, and descanted upon in detail, I determined to spare him even the apprehension that I had gone to see him merely to ascertain how he liked his new mode of life; in other words, how he could bear it. Beyond a certain time, however, I did not think it kind to keep away; so, making some business connected with his wardrobe my ostensible plea, I called one day about eleven, and was surprised to find him reading the newspaper, with slippers on, while his room smelt so intolerably of smoke, that I could not for some time command my voice to speak.

The case, however, was not so bad as at first it appeared. Martyn had really been out early, looking after the work-

men, and had come in so wet and cold, that he said he believed he should have an illness: and, indeed, what else had he to expect? I soon saw that he was exceedingly out of humour, nervous, irritable, and cast down in every way.

Perhaps I ought earlier to have said, that, like many other persons to whom pleasure is most intense, the dread of pain or suffering was to my brother extreme. He was daring and manly enough, on great occasions, and the excitement of an enterprise carried him away out of himself; but notwithstanding his excellent constitution, and hitherto almost uninterrupted health, he was, with regard to all liabilities to ordinary illness, morbidly sensitive, and sometimes imagined himself in the incipient stage of some malignant fever, caught from the exposure to rough weather and bad air to which his peculiar kind of occupation subjected him. Indeed I could make excuses enough for him, both then and now; for in looking at the habits of those with whom he associated, I doubt whether any single gentleman amongst them would not have had recourse to the same means to which he applied, when endeavouring to defend himself from the influence of unwholesome air, in addition to the damp and cold which he often had to endure.

Taking into account the general habits of society, it was not much to be wondered at that my brother, at this time, considered his case peculiarly hard, and secretly rebelled against the severe restrictions that kept him, in the gloomy month of November, awake and alive to every ache, and chill, and pain, which he had been accustomed to drive away by what, to him, appeared the most easy and comfortable resource imaginable.

They make great mistakes who endeavour to enforce this sacrifice by calling it a light or easy one, and they injure the cause they would serve when they do so. Under some circumstances it is easy, no doubt, and it ought to be made as easy as possible in all. But let those who call it easy, after breaking off a long course of indulgence of this kind, sit by themselves through dark November days, when the rain is splashing against their windows, and the wind comes sharp and chilly through the thousand apertures of some ill-constructed lodging; and if they have no conscience in the matter, no conviction, and no prayer to help them, will

it then be found an easy thing, especially when every individual for whose opinion they have any regard sets them down as mad or mean?

My brother had been more ready in his compliance with Mr. Henley's wishes than he was willing to abide by the consequences, which indeed he had, in all probability, never fairly calculated: and he was now smarting under the twofold infliction of his own unsatisfied wants and the ridicule of all his acquaintance.

"But you tell them, honestly, how it is?" said I, when he had spoken of one and another who had been to spend their evenings with him, but had soon left him, unable to understand why his mode of entertainment had suddenly become so meagre and miserable.

"Tell them, indeed? not I," he answered. "I'm not going to tell *them*. They *would* think me a fool."

"That," said I, "is just what they would *not* think you if they knew all. It is, in my opinion, the very thing that they would be least likely to despise you for."

"You don't know anything about it, Pattie. How should you? But—" he stopped, and then went on—"you are not likely to stay very long, perhaps, are you?"

"No," said I, laughing. "Do you want to get rid of me?"

"I want my pipe," said he, "that's all."

"Oh, Martyn," I exclaimed, "how can you be so vulgar!"

"I don't care," said he, looking half sullen, and half sheepish. "Nobody will ever come near me now. It's of no consequence what I do."

"Why surely," I said, "all the happiness on earth does not consist in eating and drinking."

"A good deal of it does, I've a notion," said Martyn.

"Well," said I, rising, "I shall leave you now, for I don't consider you are very good company to-day. I suppose you are extremely busy, Martyn?"

"Busy! yes," said he. "Henley works me to death. Heigh ho! this is a weary old world, Pattie."

"I don't find it so," said I. "But I'll come some other day, Martyn, when I hope I shall find you more companionable," and with these words I left him, not at all disposed to think there was more in his foolish complaints than a

kind of childish impatience, which found momentary relief in these expressions of discontent. In my presence, it was no uncommon thing for Martyn to magnify his grievances, especially when they arose out of any exercise of self-restraint: and I was accustomed to let him go grumbling on until he was tired, well knowing that, when these moods were upon him, one cause of trouble or annoyance would be no sooner removed, than another would start up to fill its place.

I had of course no doubt of my brother's faithful adherence to his promise. Whatever might be his faults of temper, or of self-indulgence, his honour was unimpeachable; and I still believe it was as far from his thoughts, as from mine, that he should break his word.

The distance of my uncle's residence from where my brother lodged, the season of the year, and the unusual severity of the weather, combined with other circumstances to prevent my seeing Martyn again for some weeks. Once I had called, and found him out, and was glad to think that he was too busy to be much at home. I had all this time the full enjoyment of believing that he was safe and well; and the security I enjoyed from all fears on his account, made my whole life wear a different aspect. So strong and sure did that promise seem to be, so much like a wall of adamant between my brother and danger, that I could sometimes have started up, and clapped my hands with exultation, when alone in my little room, at the top of the house, where I could think of him without interruption. It is true I watched the weather as I had never done before, thinking often how wet and cold he must be, for the rain fell in torrents. It was an unusually sickly time, too. Fevers prevailed in the lower parts of the town. There was great distress amongst the poor. I ought to have been more pitiful; but I thought only of my brother, and in thinking of him, found a happiness which I had never known before.

In the midst of these new enjoyments, which were doubly valuable from their rarity, there fell a terrible blow upon me, and it came from quite an unexpected quarter. My brother, I heard, had caught a fever; and though perfectly aware of the facility with which reports increase by circulation, this having reached me by a circuitous route, I lost

no time in hastening to my brother's lodgings, under the fearful apprehension that I should find him on a sick bed, and perhaps too ill to know me. Indeed I had a thousand fears, none of which did I communicate to my aunt, lest from the dread of infection she should forbid my going.

I had scarcely, however, entered the house where my Martyn lodged, before I discovered that he had some one with him in his sitting-room, who was talking in a loud manly voice, very unlike that of a visitant in a sick room; nor did the people of the house when they let me in, say anything calculated to increase my fears. My brother had been ailing they told me, and had wished to see Dr. Cavenish, who was now with him.

Considerably relieved I ran up stairs, and there found my brother reclining on a sofa, and the doctor sitting on the opposite side of the fire, evidently pretty warmly engaged in some political discussion. He rose, however, when I entered, and immediately changed the subject.

"Why, Martyn," I said, walking up to my brother and taking his hand,—“what is the matter? and why did you not send to let me know?”

"I scarcely know myself," he replied, and the Doctor then began to explain. "There was great prostration of strength," he said; "want of tone in the system generally—liver out of order, and what not. Bad time of the year—very sickly season, Miss Bond; never knew a season more so."

"But my brother, I hope, is not much amiss?" I said.

"Oh dear no," said the Doctor, "soon set right again. The worst is, Miss Bond, your brother has no appetite—at least for what he ought to eat. I have prescribed for him a mutton chop and a little—just a *little* brandy and water when he dines, and he tells me he could not take it."

"No, sir," said I, "I do not think he could."

Martyn looked suddenly full into my face, and I felt that in speaking hastily and earnestly, I had nearly overstepped the bounds of truth. The Doctor, too, looked sharply at me. I began to feel as if they were both regarding me as an impediment in their way.

"I am sure," I said, "it will not do for my brother to take either brandy or wine."

"Not a glass of sherry?" asked the Doctor, now begin-

Amongst the number who surrounded us there was one couple who attracted universal attention. It was a young husband and wife, the parents of one child, which the woman carried in her arms. They had been seated at the farther end of the room, and as the company made way for them to pass, there were frequent whispers distinctly to be heard, such as—"There goes Will Grant, of all men upon earth!"

I asked Mr. James who this Will Grant might be, and why the people thought so much about his signing the pledge. He told me he was a good-hearted fellow enough, but a terrible drunkard, and had lately fallen into bad practices of many kinds.

"And the wife?" I asked.

"Oh, she, poor thing! was a very decent girl, they say, brought up too well for him; but she would marry him—nothing could dissuade her from it; and now, with that young babe of hers, they say she's heart-broken. But see! Why, surely it is not Will himself who is going to sign?"

Will Grant was a fine, handsome specimen of the sturdy labouring man; but the habits to which my companion alluded had given him somewhat of the poacher's, or the smuggler's cast of character. His face was flushed, and his jet-black hair hung in thick matted locks about his brow and temples. He looked like a man of terrific passions; but there was nothing servile or sinister in the expression of his face. The wife was also a fine creature, in her way, and a fitting mate for him. Tall, and well-formed, she might have borne the stamp of higher dignity in birth and station, but that a carelessness, perhaps recently contracted, was so evident in her whole manner, bearing, and costume, that scarcely was there any trace remaining of the beauty for which she was once distinguished.

Altogether they formed a remarkable spectacle as they made their way on and on, without ever being diverted to one side or the other—straight onward up to the platform, where it was generally supposed that Will was going either to make a speech himself, or to knock the last speaker down; for his skill in pugilistic exploits was as well known as in the destruction of his landlord's game.

But no; he had no such thought—he only wanted the

from my brother an expression of perfect willingness on his part, to relax in the strictness of his regimen, I followed the gentleman down stairs, and hastily drew him into a side room.

It was an awkward thing to stand face to face with a man of weight and influence, who, I could plainly see, would have no sympathy with me, even after the fullest explanation I might give; nor was I at all encouraged by the hasty and impatient manner in which he took out his watch, and looked at it, evidently intending to indicate that he had no time to waste upon me.

"My brother—" I began.

"Has had," said the Doctor, "some premonitory symptoms of low fever. Everything must be done to keep up the general tone. You know it may be merely low fever at first, but typhus—"

"Doctor Cavendish," I exclaimed, "that is not the question. My brother is under a solemn promise that he will not take wine or brandy, or anything of that kind, until Mr. Henley, his employer, returns."

"Mr. Henley, do you say?"

"Yes: he is left in charge by Mr. Henley."

"Why, bless me! I know Henley myself, as well as my own brother. I attended his family when his wife died. Henley is the best-hearted man in the world, and the most reasonable. I am sure he would never see a poor fellow die for want of a glass of wine or brandy either."

"In your conscience, Doctor Cavendish," said I, growing bold, "you do not believe that my brother will die from that cause."

"I say nothing about death; but in my conscience, as you put me upon that, I make it a part of my accustomed practice to recommend such stimulants in cases like his, and from convictions of my own. But my time has expired. Good morning, Miss Bond."

The man was soon gone. The sound of his carriage wheels soon died upon my ear. What was I to do? I did what most women would in my situation. I burst into tears. It was impossible for me to see Martyn then, and under such circumstances. What chance had I to move him in the right direction? I must go home and think the matter over in my own chamber, when I could do so with

much more composure; and then, perhaps, I might write to him with more effect. So I stole quietly out of the house, only giving a few charges to the people who waited upon him, to keep him well supplied with all nourishing food, to humour his appetite in every possible way; and in case he should happen to express a wish for anything more expensive than usual, I left money with the mistress of the house, sufficient at least for any present emergency.

In the quiet of my own chamber, I did think, indeed. The paper on which I wrote became more than once so blotted with my tears, that I had to take another sheet. Nor was this all. At sudden intervals of terror and of agony I threw myself down upon my knees to pray; I cannot say with hope, for a pall blacker than the night enveloped me; and I almost looked accusingly up to the great Giver of light in the bitterness of my disappointment that he had taken away the ground of my happy exultation, that he had removed, as it seemed to me, the wall of safety from around my poor brother, and left him, in his weakness, thus exposed to the burning thirst of his own inclinations, and the cruel mockery of a world in which one man, and one alone, had tried to save him in the only way in which it seemed to me possible that he should be saved. It was a dark night to me—dark in every sense; for though I prayed earnestly, it was without hope, and worse still, it was without any real abiding belief in the goodness and the mercy of the Being I thus addressed.

It was a dark night, and there can be little doubt but the sad letter which I penned at intervals partook in some measure of my own bitter despondency and gloom. One thing I do know—it was affectionate, so much so, that as I wrote, particularly towards the close, such tears of tenderness gushed from my eyes, that I strove in vain to see. And then I fell back in my chair, and began musing about my mother, our childhood, and our home. And then again I roused myself, and took up a more argumentative and manly strain, endeavouring to rouse my brother into a livelier sense of honour, and of the glory of self-mastery. In all probability, the letter was a strange compound. I believe such letters generally are exceedingly fruitless when addressed to men; written tenderness having much less effect upon them, than that which is visible, and tangible; while

the pain which such letters necessarily occasion is just looked upon as so much voluntary annoyance, which might and ought to have been spared. I have no doubt now, but that the plainest, simplest, and most common-sense statement, making the case clear to my brother as a matter of honour, and nothing more, would have done more good than the full pages I sent him, wrung out with tears and prayers from the deep anguish of my own heart.

CHAPTER X.

I HAD of course requested my brother to acquaint me with any decision at which he might arrive, with regard to following the doctor's advice, or mine. Until I received that assurance, I said I did not think I could see him, unless his illness became more serious, in which case I knew the people of the house would not fail to inform me. But day after day passed over, and no letter came. I ascertained, by message, that my brother was not worse; only something, I thought, must be amiss, or he would surely have written. So when about a week had expired, and still without intelligence, I set off to see him, determined to ascertain for myself how the matter stood; for, in the midst of my anxiety, I was less troubled about his health than his safety and his honour.

I found my brother looking very much better than on any former visit, and he reported of himself that he was rapidly getting well, quite cosey, hearty, and different in every way. He could sleep now, he said, and the mutton chops he consumed! it was amazing. He had sometimes a ringing sort of headache, but he did not mind it much. And then, some of these good fellows came and sate with him, and helped him through the evenings. "It was very good of them, was it not?"

I agreed that it was; but did not quite know what to make of all this, when Martyn turned suddenly upon me, saying:—

"By the way, Pattie, what on earth could possess you to send me such a letter? If you had wanted to kill me

outright, I don't think you could have done your part more discreetly."

"But it hasn't killed you, I see," I answered, "for you are certainly looking better."

"Better? yes; to be sure I am. There is some sense in that Dr. Cavendish. I like the old fellow. He has some heart in him, too."

"What makes you think so much of his heart, Martyn?"

"Why, he has helped me through a difficulty that I should never have got out of, without him."

"How so? Has he done more than send you medicine?"

"Yes, a great deal."

"Tell me what?"

"You remember what he told me to do; what to eat, and drink, and all that, and you know the awkward fix I was in. Indeed, now I think of it, I believe it was you that told him."

"I did."

"Well, whether you meant it well or not, it all turned out well. He spoke to me plainly, the next time he came, and I told him frankly how I was bound. He said he knew Henley as well as any man, and that half a word from him would set all right."

"But, Martyn, did you tell him all? Did you tell him *why* Mr. Henley extracted this promise from you?"

"Not exactly, of course. Why should I? He was at liberty to guess, and he probably did guess, for we had a long talk together on the subject, and I can tell you, Pattie, I never heard any man talk more sensibly in my life. He showed me plainly how there is no merit whatever—can be no merit in a man abstaining altogether from these things; that the highest duty of a man is to master himself; and that self-mastery consists in taking as much as health requires, and no more."

"Did he say how much health does require?"

"That, you know, must always depend upon circumstances."

"Ah! Martyn, you are not like yourself now, when you talk in this way. I am sure your quick eye sees through the fallacy of the argument; because, if the indulgence is to be meted out exactly accordingly to our state of health, we should want a new doctor's certificate every day, and then

must not make him an anchorite: moderation, you know, is my virtue. I have no notion of your cells and caves, with bread and water for perpetual punishment. You should have been a Roman Catholic, Miss Bond."

"I might then have bought a licence for my brother to do as he liked, and for myself too. But *will* you speak to Mr. Henley, dear sir?"

"Oh yes; I'll do my best for you, and if I fail it can't be helped."

"He must know of hundreds of situations for young men like Martyn."

"And for every situation a hundred candidates, I dare say."

"One word of recommendation from him would be just a fortune to my brother."

"Well, we'll see,—we'll see, Miss Bond; and, in the meantime, I'll just step up stairs, and see how the young man is going on. I have not troubled you with many visits lately."

"I hope my brother will not need many more."

"Very good. Then you don't wish to see me?"

"Oh yes!—I always wish very much to see you; but—"

"But you don't want a long bill, eh? Now, am I not a very acute old gentleman to penetrate so deeply into a young lady's meaning?"

"I don't know that I did mean that, exactly, though I have no shame in confessing to you that we are not just now the most affluent couple in the world."

"Then I'll tell you a little secret, my dear, just to set your mind at ease."

"What is it?"

"For anything I may have done to serve your poor brother, Miss Bond, I will never take a single farthing from either of you."

"Oh, sir!—my dear sir!—you must not treat us so; we can pay you; indeed we can!"

"Very likely; but you won't pay me. I have never intended that you should—never, at least, since this unlucky affair; for, strange little nun as you are, Miss Bond—and a better Sister of Charity never sate by a sick bed,—I cannot help feeling in my inmost heart that you were right, and I was wrong, about your brother, considering all his circumstances; and that my stupid advice

was the means of bringing all this trouble upon you both. But come now, I can't have you crying at that rate; I'll send you in a bill for the cure of your eyes, if you do. And see here, I declare it's three o'clock! My time has expired, and I have not seen my patient at all. Was ever anything like these women for talking, and crying, and making fools of themselves, and us? There, go to your brother, and tell him the old Doctor called to know how he was, and will see him another day when he has more time. Good-bye, my dear; I'll see Henley, if possible, to-night."

And the Doctor was as good as his word, for that very night he saw the man of influence, and pleaded my brother's case so well that before the expiration of a month he had become a hopeful candidate for a situation remote from the scene of his late disaster, and where we knew not at first that we either of us had a single friend.

With Mr. Henley himself my brother held no communication. His kind friend the Doctor transacted all the business for him. The situation was neither a very lucrative nor a very exalted one, but it might lead to something better; and the recommendation of Mr. Henley would have been regarded by many besides ourselves as equivalent to a kind of establishment for life. Here, then, if successful, my brother's fortune would be again made.

Whatever might be Mr. Henley's secret opinion or feeling, his recommendation of Martyn as a young man of capability and talent was clear, and apparently cordial. There is little doubt but he did, what all honourable men would under such circumstances, communicate with the parties privately as well; and perhaps state clearly what was the only drawback to set against my brother's unquestionably high qualifications. Of this we never knew the particulars. One fact was enough;—my brother was successful, and his appointment was the more honourable to him, or rather to his late employer, that he was chosen above many other candidates.

All was bustle and excitement now with Martyn and me. We had so much to talk about, arrange, and actually to do, that for some time we scarcely made the place itself where he was about to become a resident the subject of our inquiries or calculations. By degrees, however, as the work we had in hand began to slacken, and especially as a

growing sense of my own loneliness and need of some provision for the future became more vividly present to my mind, I turned my thoughts to this new field of action, wondering whether something might not be found for me also to do there. My brother, in the first flush of exultation, had very naturally promised me a home with him; but we soon saw, on calculating his salary, that this would be impossible for any length of time, nor would it have been at all congenial to my feelings under any circumstances, to hang as a dead weight upon his hands. I knew also from past experience, how far his kind intentions generally exceeded his performance, so that, much as he enjoyed in anticipation the idea of maintaining his sister by his own exertions, it was one of those utopian schemes which I indulged him with talking about, but never for a single moment allowed myself to regard as a reality.

Something, however, must be done, and I determined to do it promptly and heartily. For returning to my Uncle Russell's I had neither opportunity nor inclination: they did not ask me to do so; yet I was not cast down, nor desponding; for though I confess that at this time it did seem to me a little as though I was in my own person just one too many in the world, yet so much had I been accustomed to live in my brother's prosperity, to rise when he did well, and to sink only with his fall, that with the happy prospect of his new and amended course of life now before us, I was able to cast behind me all fears about myself; "only" as I repeated in the secret of my heart, "something must be done, and that quickly."

To women who have been well brought up there is unfortunately only one course of honourable occupation fairly open; and one evening, as Martyn and I sate together, I asked him suddenly what he thought of my being a governess?

"You a governess! No, Pattie," he said, "never so long as I have a roof to shelter you."

"But suppose, Martyn, your roof is not quite wide enough to shelter us both?"

"Then we'll creep the closer together," said he, in the words of the old song, and at the same time, with his arms around me, he drew me to his side.

"This ~~was all~~ well, all very pleasant. "But Martyn,"

I said, "my mind is made up. I am going to work as well as you. Only I want one thing which I am very much afraid is impossible. I want to obtain a situation in the same place with you. I wish I knew anybody there."

I had scarcely uttered these words, when a sudden recollection flashed upon me. It came in the form of a pale gentle girl with whom I was rather intimately acquainted at school, but had entirely lost sight of since; and as the vision grew upon me, I exclaimed,—"*I do* know somebody, after all. Alice Fielding lives there. Her father is a Reverend of some kind—a minister of religion, but I really forget of what denomination, whether Church or Dissent, if indeed I ever knew."

"Who is Alice Fielding?" asked Martyn; "and what can she do for you?"

"She may possibly do something—who knows? Her father, from his position, must know many families, and their wants. I will write to her this very night."

"Don't be foolish, Pattie. The people may have left the place. Besides which, your plan altogether is absurd."

"Why so?"

"In the first place I am not sure that it is quite respectable,—I mean that it will add to our respectability in a new place."

"To *your* respectability, I suppose you mean, Martyn."

"Well, perhaps I do."

"Oh, never mind that, dear. I need not claim acquaintance with you at first. If I find I am very much looked down upon, I need not at all, you know. We can each go on our separate ways, and if *you* can take care of our respectability, I think I shall not endanger it much. Besides which, I believe the Fieldings are a family of extremely good standing in the world, and if they take me by the hand, and are not ashamed of me, surely you need not."

"But will they take you by the hand?"

"That is precisely what I am going to try. If I write directly, and clearly to Alice, I think I shall be able to gather, from the tone of her reply, what she thinks of my plan, or rather of me, in connection with it; and I am not pledged to anything by writing, you know—my letter will only be one of inquiry."

"Well, as you like, Pattie; but I cannot say I approve, though I may submit. You are an excellent nurse, nobody can deny that."

"Then you doubt my abilities as a governess; do you Martyn?"

"If you will ask me so direct a question, I must tell you that I believe I do."

"Oh, you don't half know me yet, Martyn. You did not suppose I could nurse, or cook, or make a bed to a sick man's liking, until you saw me tried."

"Yes, but teaching is a very different affair. You want so much pretension and sham dignity for that; exactly the qualifications which you have not, and which I hope and trust you never will have."

"We shall see; but in the meantime, I don't think it quite right to leave this place altogether without a word to my Uncle and Aunt Russell."

"Why, Pattie, they would have let me die without a word."

"That has nothing to do with the question of what is right or wrong for us to do."

"I think it has a good deal to do with it. At all events, I shall not write."

"No, Martyn, but I shall."

"Well then, you take the pleasant duty upon yourself, and I'll tell you of one which I am going to discharge, in the meantime."

"What is it Martyn? Can I help you?"

"Why, I have been thinking, as I have no more use for wine, having no friends, as you see; and as these Jameses must have had a good deal of trouble with me upon their hands during the time of my illness, I might as well leave all that old port, and that capital sherry—I rather grudge it though—to Mr. and Mrs. James. It will make them a grand treat, when they have those famous parties of theirs."

"A very good thought, Martyn."

"I really do grudge it though, Pattie, for my Uncle Russell taught me one thing—how to choose my wine."

"I don't think his teaching is likely to be of much value, for you know you don't want wine now, Martyn."

"No, not just now, certainly."

"And the brandy? I think there is brandy, too."

"Oh ! that I shall not part with."

"Why not ?"

"I must keep it for medicine. It is that capital French brandy that Dr. Cavendish ordered in for me before I was ill."

: "It did not keep you from being ill, Martyn."

"Another time it may. There are sudden attacks, you know, against which one must be provided. Besides which, it was prescribed at that time by my doctor—the best and the kindest doctor in the world ; so be reasonable, Pattie, and don't go too far. To a certain extent, I'll do my best to please you, but beyond that I cannot go, and you must not ask me."

I felt that at that moment it was better not to push the subject further, and my brother was now so entirely exempt, as it seemed to me, from all temptation or desire to return to his former habits ; his severe illness and the abstemiousness which it had been necessary to enforce, had so broken the chain of old associations, that I dreaded the very mention of the subject, and had carefully avoided it myself up to this moment. It was entirely his own doing now that it was introduced, and I need scarcely say how glad I was to find that the habit of taking wine was to form no part of his future way of living, though I still shrunk with a kind of internal shuddering from the way in which he spoke of it.

"So far so good ;" was the conclusion with which I was so often compelled to be satisfied, that I made it serve the simple purpose of contentment now ; and up to the time of my brother's final departure the subject was never mentioned again.

It had been agreed between us that Martyn should go alone to enter upon his new occupation, for I could easily understand how the fact of dragging along with him a sister who was looking out for employment as a governess might, in the outset, somewhat retard the progress of a young gentleman and a stranger, who had to work his own way up to respectability, as well as independence ; for there is perhaps no greater hindrance to human help than the fact of *needing* it. When that creeps out, cordiality seems instantly to shrivel up ; and hands that were about to be stretched forth in welcome draw back to tighten the purse-strings, and to shut-to the door.

I therefore willingly conformed to what I saw most likely to be conducive to my brother's good; and except for the interest and pleasure I should have felt in arranging and fitting up his new home, and in observing in the first entrance upon his new life, what auspices were favourable or otherwise, I was quite as well satisfied to remain in my present circumstances, where I could quietly await the issue of the many different applications which I thought it most likely I might have to make, before my own settlement as a governess could be effected.

The letter which I proposed writing to my Aunt Russell had been faithfully dispatched. It produced a cold, but not disapproving answer. Martyn was not once mentioned, though I had taken care to tell them under what favourable circumstances he had left; and as to my own plan, my aunt said that if I could obtain a situation at a *distance*, both she and my uncle thought it the best thing I could do to go out as a governess. If I wanted a little ready money, they should be willing to accommodate me, on my intimating such want; and they hoped I should be successful, and comfortable for the future.

I lost no time in assuring my aunt that I was not at all in want of money; and thus our acquaintance, never very congenial, died a sort of natural death. We had no quarrel, nor do I believe they would have had the slightest objection to the continuance of my presence and my services in their household, provided I could have been always a credit to them.

My correspondence with Alice Fielding, my former school companion, was less rapid in its result. The first application produced a letter of mere civility, but altogether without hope; and then I set about to advertise, and had enough to do with answering and receiving letters, to keep me for some time from dwelling upon my own circumstances with anything like gloom. None of my advertisements, however, produced exactly what I wanted, or rather what the parties requiring assistance wanted in me; for I dared not presume to say I would teach what I did not know myself, and I was beginning to think I must really give up this mode of occupation altogether, and turn my attention to some other, when one day, to my great delight, there came a letter from Alice Fielding opening to me the chance

of a situation in the very town where Martyn lived, provided only I would be content with a very moderate salary.

Perhaps upon the whole I was better pleased that the salary was moderate, because then there could be no painful disproportion betwixt that and my own qualifications, of which I knew that I ought not to boast. So I wrote again, urging that no time should be lost in securing the situation for me, if possible without my going, for I could ill afford the expense of so long a journey undertaken upon a mere venture.

My ignorance of the whole business was sufficiently attested by the eagerness with which I urged my cause, for I never once thought of the necessity of special recommendations in such a case, and indeed had none to offer. Happily for me, however, it so happened that Alice Fielding retained a very favourable impression of me in my school days; and as the situation proposed was one in which her word, and especially her father's, could do more in my favour than many certificates, the whole transaction was so favourably conducted, that before the expiration of a month I was fairly equipped, and on my way to my new home.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE family beneath whose roof I was to enter upon my new occupations, and where I was to find a new home, consisted of a gentleman and lady, with four children, three of whom were to be placed under my immediate care. All were young; even the parents appeared scarcely old enough to be brought into circumstances of such serious responsibility: but the children surprised me the most, because of the little apparent difference in their ages. I soon learned that one was a relative, about the age of the eldest son of the family. He was a feeble, sickly boy, who had been sent home from India, to be placed under the care of his uncle—my “master,” as Martyn called him, and consequently educated along with his own children.

Mr. Gardener, for that was the name of the head of this household, though an affable, pleasant, and gentlemanly

man, was struggling with those necessary difficulties which beset the path of a medical professor who has to edge himself in with a wife and family, where there is only a very dubious opening. His first sure footing seemed scarcely to have been gained at the time of my becoming an inmate in his household, and I thought I could discover that the little Indian boy was more valued than beloved. Master Frederick, it is true, was an object of great consideration; his name was often mentioned, and I believe nothing was omitted likely to contribute to his health or his bodily comfort. But Master Frederick was so evidently a stranger, notwithstanding all the care bestowed upon him, that my heart yearned towards the poor little solitary fellow, from the first moment that I saw his pale, sallow face, particularly contrasted as it was with the burly countenance of his cousin, Master George Gardener.

What I should do with these two boys, and with a little girl about a year younger, I could not imagine. But I prudently kept my wonder to myself, and it was some consolation to find, as I thought I did in a very short space of time, that neither father nor mother cared much what I did, so long as I kept them cheerful and well-behaved, and out of the way. Both parents had enough to do—one in anticipating, rather than curing patients; the other in superintending a household not too well supplied with helps behind the scenes.

Upon the whole, I do not know that my lot could have fallen better. I knew all along that I should discharge my new duties much more respectably if left entirely to my own way of carrying them out than if narrowly watched, or closely questioned; and I was here left and trusted to my heart's content. It is true, I found more to do than I should have considered as being stipulated for; but it had never been amongst my trials to help those who were endeavouring to help themselves; and I willingly fell in with the requirements of the family, hoping the time would come when I should be repaid by the allowance of greater liberty in the disposal of my own time than could otherwise have been expected.

Anxious as I was to find out and to feel exactly upon what kind of ground my foot was now placed within the immediate sphere of our domestic life, I did not at first

attempt to see my former acquaintance, Alice Fielding, but merely sent her a note in announcement of my arrival, to which I received one in reply, assuring me that it was from no want of interest that she did not take an early opportunity of calling upon me. "Indeed," she added, "it is better we should understand each other at once, and allow it to be settled between us that we are two very busy persons, anxious to attend to duty first, yet thankful to take pleasure when it comes. You, I am sure, must find the claims of your new occupations extremely urgent; and I, ever since the death of my lamented mother, have been too much a mother myself to my little brothers and sisters to know how to leave them. But if you will kindly pardon me for the remainder of this week, I hope in a few days to be more at liberty."

My brother had the same reasons for not calling, and he knew me well enough to be perfectly assured I should not construe his absence into any kind of slight. He, too, wrote kindly, and he was perhaps the less forward in proposing an interview, because, as he did not visit with the Gardeners, nor, I believe, at that time, with any one else, I thought it would be better for his introduction to them to come from any other person than myself; and perhaps I might be able to manage it through the Fieldings, whose acquaintance Mr. Gardener appeared to consider a great acquisition: in all probability he looked upon it as a favourable omen of his future success amongst the large circle of society to which this family had access.

Perhaps, if the whole truth was told, I was not very eager for Martyn's introduction at all, until I had seen for myself, so far as I could ascertain by seeing, what was his present mode of life. With his letters I had reason to be more than satisfied, for the spirit which they breathed, though perhaps it would have scarcely been discoverable to any one but myself, was of a nature to awaken my brightest hopes; and this it was in a great measure which made the whole business of my entrance upon the duties of a governess so light, in comparison with what I had expected it to be. In one of his late letters, my brother had solemnly declared his determination to be a total abstainer. He said the vow had not been made to man, but to God; and though, in his usual manner, he turned jestingly to other subjects, I knew

too well how much such a decision, as well as the avowal of it, must have cost him, to doubt for a moment his sincerity, whatever I might think of his firmness in abiding by this prudent resolve.

Often and often did I ponder upon these letters in silence, and in earnest thought. Martyn had told me that he had no friends, and he never went out to visit; but I knew this could not last. Now, I thought, is the time,—the *blessed* time, might it not be?—for him to be introduced to some kind, intelligent family, who enjoyed all the comforts of life without this particular indulgence. Now was the time, if such a company could be found, for him to be introduced to the society of earnest, intelligent young men, all holding themselves above the bondage of custom in this respect. But where were such to be found? “I, at least,” I said to myself, “shall have the advantage of religious society: perhaps I can obtain for Martyn the same privilege. Society of some kind he must have. In his present state of mind he will probably be more open to receive religious impressions himself. He seems to be thoughtful, at any rate. May God so bless and elevate his thoughts, that he shall be led at last into the only path of perfect peace.” But the full amount of good upon which I was calculating from my brother’s association with the religious world was not even known to myself until the time when it came to be thoroughly tested.

I have not thus far said anything to indicate whether the religious circle of which Mr. Fielding was considered so great an ornament, belonged to the Established Church of England or not; nor is it my intention to do so. The sentiments which pervaded that circle are not peculiar to any religious denomination. With creeds or parties this simple story has nothing whatever to do; nor would I venture to insinuate that the spirit of true Christianity was not an active principle with many who formed that circle, widely as I have since learned to differ from them on the practical morality of some of their familiar habits.

It is rather difficult to speak of the place of worship in which the Rev. John Fielding faithfully discharged the duties of a minister, without specifying either church or chapel. I may possibly speak of both under one general idea. Suffice it, that Mr. Gardener attended his ministry,

and attached himself strongly to his views and interests, from motives which it was no business of mine to question.

On the first Sunday after my arrival there, I made my appearance with the family in this place of worship; and, looking about a little on our first entrance, to see if I could recognise my former school companion, I saw the very same pale face, enveloped in deep mourning, not very far from where I was seated. It was an affecting spectacle, to see one so young as Alice Fielding thus attired, and to know the cause which placed her in that matronly capacity, amongst a group of children all younger than herself, and all claiming, it seemed, the utmost exercise of her attention and care; for I never once caught her eye, nor saw her looking away with any evidence of thought that wandered from the purpose which had called her there.

Mr. Fielding was one of those preachers whose popularity depends more upon personal influence than pulpit oratory. He managed to retain, Sunday after Sunday, the same large audience, composed of attentive listeners, who could not have been lured away by the most accomplished speaker, the most graceful flow of language, or the most elaborate discourse. I could not as I listened discover the secret of this attraction; but I learned afterwards that it might be found in the parental sympathy of the faithful pastor, and in the even tenor of a long course of upright and gentlemanly conduct amongst a large body of people, whose opinions and sentiments leaned for the most part exactly the same way as his own. Of these there were many whose minds might be said to be almost entirely in the keeping of their beloved minister, who only waited to know what were his opinions on any given subject before adopting the same; and who, if they did not exactly worship him, approached so nearly to that degree of reverence that they were apt to blend the motive with the man, and to regard the principles he set before them less than the preacher himself.

It was altogether a heart-cheering spectacle to see this good man surrounded and supported by his friends, amongst whom he walked with no pretended humility, but rather as if he accepted their homage as due, if not to himself as man, yet certainly to his office, and to the cause which his life was spent in advocating.

Often during the services of that morning did I look with deep interest towards the daughter, who, though in some respects like her father, had altogether a much more expressive countenance. It was not more handsome, for Mr. Fielding was an extremely fine-looking man; but Alice had deeper meaning in every turn of her interesting face, and a tenderness which her father wanted. I could see this at the distance at which I sat; for one-half of the time was employed in keeping a little brother in order, towards whom she had to stoop and whisper many times, even smiling occasionally, for it was evidently one of the first experiments the little gentleman had made in listening to a sermon.

Once, while endeavouring to withdraw my eyes from this interesting group, I glanced for a moment away over the heads of the closely-seated congregation, when a figure in the distance suddenly caught my eye. But no! it could not be. Martyn had never given me any reason to think that I should find him there; yet certainly that figure must be his. He raised his head—it *was* my brother, looking grave and earnest, as if really interested in the discourse. It would not be easy to describe the effect which the expression of his countenance, and the fact of seeing him there, produced upon my feelings. He had not recognised me, and I was not particularly anxious that he should; I therefore only looked at him now and then by stealth, and when the service was concluded I allowed him to depart amongst the crowd, without once turning my head in that direction.

Here again was hope. I walked back to my new home with a step as light as if I had been the proprietor of every house in the streets through which I passed. That long Sunday would otherwise have been a dull day to me; but I felt nothing a hardship now, I knew no dulness. Everything around me possessed some kind of interest. The children were very tiresome, but I was not wearied; the master and mistress of the house were pre-occupied and thoughtful, but I found no want of social intercourse. The thing I most wished for now was, to get Martyn fairly introduced to the Fieldings and their friends, and then I thought all would be safe—all would be well.

The glimpse I had caught of my brother while listening

to Mr. Fielding's sermon, and the general character of his appearance and demeanour on that occasion, so favoured my confidence in the general propriety of his present mode of life, that I ventured to ask him to call and see me; and even spoke to the family freely about him, as a preliminary step to his introduction. He came accordingly at a time when Mr. Gardener happened to be at home; and he managed, as indeed he almost always did, so to please both the lady and gentleman of the house, that he was cordially invited to repeat his visit, and even to come whenever he liked to spend a quiet hour with me. Martyn was naturally fond of children; and besides some well-timed and respectful attentions to the heads of the family, he had so drawn around him the younger branches, that before the termination of his call, one was seated on his knee, another clinging upon the back of his chair; while a third, the timid little Indian boy, was creeping softly by his side, and looking up into his face with eyes that spoke at once of wonder and admiration. I believe the whole family, when he was gone, thought they had never made a more agreeable acquaintance than my brother; and I could perceive that my own place in their regard rose higher from this time. Martyn's call was repeated during the week; and then it was agreed that he should join us on the following Sunday, and spend the day with us.

About the same time my dignity received other accessions, all tending to place me in circumstances of comfort and respectability with regard to the family in which I lived. Mr. Fielding and his daughter came together for the express purpose of calling on me. I was delighted to recognise in Alice the sweet girl I had loved at school; and to feel as I did, after a few minutes' conversation, that I could love her still, perhaps better, and with warmer interest, in proportion as her own affections had been called forth and her character matured by the circumstances of tenderness and solicitude in which she had recently been placed.

Disinclined as I had felt while residing with the Russells to form any kind of friendship with the ladies into whose society I was thrown, I now yielded in idea to the pleasant hope that this natural want of my heart would be supplied, and that in Alice Fielding I should find the friend into whose sympathising soul I had so often longed to pour the

deepest feelings of my own. One thing only seemed wanting—she might not be attracted in a similar manner by me.

Towards the father I confess I experienced less attraction. There was about him too much of the professional character to suit my taste. He inquired of Mrs. Gardener respecting the health of her children in terms the most expressive of interest, and in tones the most paternal; while she, with the blind fondness of a mother, replied at great length about sore throats and measles; but I could see the minister's eyes, when he appeared to be listening, were cold and meaningless as glass, and that he was in reality only waiting for an opening to begin with a totally different subject of conversation. What could he do? In the course of his professional calls he had to sympathise with all the sore throats and all the measles of his large congregation, to say nothing of hooping-cough and chilblains. No wonder that the fount of feeling had become in some degree expended; or that in order to keep up the appearance of overflow, he had substituted something which, for all the purposes of making calls, would answer the end desired as well.

In his own family, Mr. Fielding was neither cold nor superficial. It was there that I soon learned to love him better than I ever should have done in his purely pastoral or ministerial capacity. Alice believed that no human being had ever walked this earth whose virtues would not suffer in comparison with those of her father. Against the exalted purity of his life I should have been the last to breathe a suspicion, so far as the religious world and his brother ministers believed it necessary to be exalted and pure. However narrow, self-denying, or severe had been the rules laid down by them for human conduct in general; however close their interpretations of the Divine law as set forth in the Holy Scriptures, his walk on earth would have been within the limits prescribed; nor would any temptations from within or from without have lured him to set his foot beyond. The only fault I had to lay to his charge was that his law was conventional, though he did not know it to be such; that he walked strictly in the path approved, because it *was* the approved path, and was rather solicitous to stand first amongst good men as they are, than to show good men what they might be.

In these views and feelings I soon found that the daughter partook largely with her father. It was almost impossible not to do so, brought up as she had been, and surrounded and hemmed in on every hand by influences of the same tendency. It was a narrow place which they occupied, after all, though apparently extending through a wide sphere of influence; but the very influence was conventional. Example, precedence, the opinion of persons of the same class, and moving in the same sphere with themselves, gave each character its tone, each family its household law; while such was the strength and the weight attaching to this universally prevailing influence, that to deviate from the individual tone, or to violate the household law, even by some action harmless in itself, would have been as startling to the whole community as to commit some grievous moral error—nay, there were moral sins, I mean only such as pride or covetousness, which probably would have excited less actual dismay.

While I contemplated this narrow sphere, however, and in some degree regretted that it was so narrow, I consoled myself with thinking it must have one strong recommendation—it must be *safe*. Temptation, I thought, could find no place within this privileged circle: the “world,” as it was called, being altogether disclaimed and shut out. Here then, I still thought, if my brother could ever plant his feet, even he would be safe too—safe, it might be, for ever.

And for coming within this circle he seemed to be rapidly preparing. I did not question him upon the subject of his feelings; I did not betray by word or tone even so much as a hope that he would now associate himself more closely with religious people. I never hinted to him that I had seen him in a place of worship; and I had left it to Mr. and Mrs. Gardener to press him to join us on the following Sunday, for I knew how much I should myself be repelled by a too eager anticipation of any improvement in my character or conduct; and I shrunk from wounding in my brother what I still hoped might prove to be the opening germs of aspiration after a higher and more enduring happiness than he had yet enjoyed. But when the Sunday morning came, I watched for him not the less with eager expectation; and there he was at the appointed time, looking as I fondly fancied only *he* could look in the whole world,

and proud and happy was I to walk beside so graceful a figure, leaning on his manly arm.

There was not room for both Martyn and me to sit with the Gardeners that day. We were shown into another pew, and it was some time before I observed that we had been placed exactly behind that which was occupied by Alice Fielding and her brothers and sisters. It was their deep mourning which first attracted my notice, and then I soon discovered who they were. One little incident, which had no business in a place of worship, drew my attention more particularly to the interesting group.

I have said that on a previous occasion Alice had enough to do to keep the youngest members of her family in order during the time of religious service; and there was one little boy who particularly claimed her watchful care, for what with the slumbrous effect of his heavy black clothing, and alternate fits of restlessness amounting almost to actual rebellion, she was under the necessity of holding him closely by her side, and when the congregation stood up she placed him also in a standing position upon the seat. She had been so busy with him tying and untying strings, that her glove was taken off, and with her arm around the child there remained one white hand immediately in view of Martyn and me; and so near that we could see the blue veins, and might have counted them. I never saw so beautiful a hand. Martyn was not slow to discover it; and forgetting all that he should have remembered, he motioned me to look at it. Sometimes, too, the face was so turned that we could see the exquisite symmetry of the features, though never once were the dark blue eyes so raised that I could catch a glance of recognition. Even when the service was over there was still so much to be done in attending to the children, that though we saw the dimpling of that beautiful mouth, which almost smiled as it gently reproved the boy for his troublesome behaviour,—even then there passed no sign of recognition between us; and I walked away with my brother, only whispering to him as we went—“*That was Alice Fielding.*”

Martyn made no answer at the time, but the whole of that afternoon as we sate together in a room which I was allowed to call my own, he plied me with questions relating to my former school-companion, more numerous and more minute than it was possible for me to answer. So much so,

indeed, that I became a little tired of the subject, and endeavoured to change it for some that were far more interesting to me than any white hand, blue eyes, or dark eyelashes in the whole world.

I would gladly have led the conversation to more serious subjects; but Martyn's fancy ever wandered back again to that alabaster hand. I would gladly have encouraged him to persevere in the habit of avowing, as he had done that day openly and without hesitation to Mr. Gardener, that he never took wine, an avowal which had cut short the after-dinner enjoyment in which the gentleman of the house allowed himself to indulge on Sundays; but Martyn would talk about the rarity and beauty of a complexion so surpassingly delicate and transparent, set off by the soft and silky waves of hair dark as the raven's wing.

"I can make nothing of you to-day, Martyn," I said. "You are perfectly bewildered and absurd."

He concluded the day by a most unwonted urgency to listen to another sermon. I went with him in the evening, and we were shown into a seat far away from that of the minister's family. Besides which, Alice was not there.

CHAPTER XV.

THERE is no maxim more useful than that we must be satisfied to let people do well in their own way. Had I attempted to compel my brother to do well in mine, I should certainly have suggested a little less talk about Alice Fielding, a little more about those immediate concerns of practical importance with which his future as well as mine were now connected. I wanted, in the first place, to learn everything about his new duties, occupations, and general position; and perhaps I wanted no less to tell him of mine; but from him I could elicit very little, except that he spent the whole of every day drawing plans in a dull office; and when I would have described my own circumstances as equally uninteresting, he stopped me suddenly by saying, "But you can see Alice Fielding."

The fact was, they had met during the week, having by some lucky or unlucky incident happened to call upon me

at the same time. I think they were mutually pleased with each other, for Alice was that morning more lively and communicative than I had seen her before. It would, perhaps, have been impossible to find two young persons more differently constituted by nature, but they were not for that reason less likely to be pleasing to each other. Indeed it is no unfrequent thing to find such difference the very cause of agreement, because each individual supplies exactly what the other most wants.

My next step towards the intimacy, which I was glad to find so auspiciously begun, was to call on the Fieldings in company with my brother. I feared not to do this now; and I had received from Mr. Fielding the assurance that he would be welcome. Soon after this followed an invitation for Martyn and me to dine at their house, to meet a few familiar friends: and we were both extremely glad to do so, for good society had recently become to us both an enjoyment of rare occurrence.

I should very much have preferred being invited only for the evening, but I found that the Fieldings, in their way, were little less studious of all which belongs to the receiving and paying of visits than my Uncle and Aunt Russell had been; and that the duties of hospitality, and the respectability of their table and establishment, filled no mean place in their estimation. The world thought all the better of them for this. I wished it had been otherwise.

And yet, when I saw Alice seated at the head of her father's well-appointed table, I could scarcely have desired that anything should have been different from what it was. Certainly, if Martyn had admired her before, he might have been pardoned for thinking her now one of the most graceful as well as most perfect of gentlewomen. All that Alice said and did in this position was marked by a degree of ease and self-possession which to me was astonishing. In this view of her character she seemed to have been formed to command, and yet every tone and movement was perfectly gentle and quiet. I should, perhaps, have thought her *too* quiet and *too* self-possessed, almost *too* cold, but for a blush of rare delicacy and beauty which frequently stole into her face, making its marble paleness instinct with a kind of hidden life, and thus disclosing the only agreeable fact which it was possible to doubt respecting her, that she had really quick

any susceptible feelings, though schooled down to a degree of subjection which many fashionable ladies might have envied.

I am not sure that Alice Fielding possessed intellectually any very superior talent, and I had often to deplore that her reading and her conversation were bounded by the narrow views of the circle in which she moved; but there was about her a moral dignity of the highest order, which left her friends but little to wish for in the completeness of her character as a woman. Gentle as she was, in all her ways, and fragile as her tall thin figure made her appear, I still stood in a kind of awe of her, as if her spiritual nature raised her above my own level. I felt that she was one who could love deeply; but I was not quite sure that she could always forgive. Thus my ambitious thoughts went wandering on, as I watched her and Martyn conversing so pleasantly together; for it seemed to me that she was the woman in the world, and perhaps the only one, whose influence could raise him up to his true position, and keep him there.

One thing which I discovered at the dinner-table, cost me no little pain: it was, that neither Mr. Fielding nor his daughter had the slightest sympathy with my views on the subject of abstaining from wine; and that they held in contempt, amounting to horror, that public movement in favour of temperance, which had but recently begun to interest a small and obscure portion of the community. Unfortunately, this very subject was touched upon at table that day. It was suggested by my frank confession that I never took wine; and I had the mortification of hearing, in my brother's presence, the greatest absurdities laid to the charge of those "mad people," as well as to hear them accused of the lowest and most disgusting vulgarity. Beyond these charges, Mr. Fielding, with unfeigned horror, spoke of their infidelity, of the dangerous manner in which they were misleading the people, under the specious pretence of improving their moral condition, "thus substituting," he said, "outward decency for religion, sobriety for Christian faith."

This, and a great deal more of the same condemnatory nature, appeared equally to amuse and edify the guests, some of whom took a more ludicrous view of the case, and

told strange stories of what the teetotallers had said and done. For some time I dared not look at my brother; when I did so, he was laughing more heartily than any one. He also had collected stories of the same tendency, and he told them well. "But," said he, and I felt my face flush crimson while he spoke, "I, of all people, ought not to ridicule their principles, whatever I may say of their mode of enforcing them, for I am myself an abstainer."

"Oh, Mr. Bond!" exclaimed Alice: and the look she directed full into Martyn's face, did more, as I could see, to shake his resolution, than all the jeering of the gentlemen, who, however, were very properly restrained by the fact of his being a stranger; and as they probably regarded his assertion as the result of weakness, or folly, they turned the conversation to more agreeable topics.

"This," thought I, "will never do. I must speak to Alice in private. If they go on in this way, these good people, upon whose influence I have been calculating, will be the ruin of my brother, instead of saving him."

But how could I speak to Alice, or to any one else on the subject, without betraying my brother's secret?—and—ought I not to betray it? Certainly not, I concluded, so long as the evil had entirely ceased. To place him in a suspicious light amongst his new friends, to draw attention to him as a young man of questionable character, especially to convey to those who looked upon him favourably, the idea that he had come amongst them as a man disgraced, would, I felt assured, be the most certain means of driving him back again, and of consigning him to inevitable ruin. I knew not what to do. Often and often, while struggling with these difficulties, the language of my heart was, "Oh, if these people would but help me! I, a mere woman, a governess, a person of no power nor influence,—how am I to stem this universal tide of prejudice? How am I to make that self-denial, which alone can save my brother, look attractive, noble, and gentlemanly in his eyes, with nobody on my side but the poorest, the most abject, the most despised, nay, even the most ridiculed of human beings. Worse than all, have I not heard them censured as dangerous, and destructive to the welfare of their fellow-creatures, as men of blasphemy, the tendency of whose maxims must be to uproot the principles of

Christianity, and to substitute in its place the blind, bold mockery of a moral atheism?" I was bewildered, and knew not what to think or how to act. Ah, if I had known then, as I did later in life, that there were men of influence and talent, and noble-hearted women too, who bound themselves over in this respect, to defy alike the scorn of society and the iron rule of custom,—if I had known, as I do now, that there were faithful, prayerful Christians too, who spread their liberal tables for the stranger, and practised all the rights of hospitality towards both young and old, both rich and poor, without the lure of this temptation, proving how little it is needed by the generous, the enlightened, and the cheerful-hearted, what would I not have done, or what endured, to have brought my brother at this time of his life under such influence, and to have placed him within the blessed shelter of such companionship! Humanly speaking, I believe it would have been the means of entirely restoring him to his better self; it might have been of saving him for this life, and for eternity.

But at the time of which I write, I knew of no such class of persons moving in the higher walks of life. They are not numerous even now; and yet there are young men like Martyn Bond, scattered about in the thickly-crowded street, sitting at the social board, pursuing tasks of manly duty, or walking joyously along paths of pleasurable excitement; there are such young men, often,—how often! the widow's only hope, the mother's darling, and the sister's pride, the prop of the father's house and fortunes; such there are at this very moment, just balancing upon the turning point, betwixt high enterprise and sensual degradation; betwixt the generous aim of glorious ambition, and the poor drunkard's downward and irrecoverable fall. And what are we doing for them?

But to return to what the kindest and the best-intentioned—for such I still believe they were—to return to what they did for my poor brother.

The social, quiet dinner-party to which Martyn and I had been invited, was the prelude to many others of a similar nature; for he soon, as usual, became so great a favourite in Mr. Fielding's family, that his visits there were more frequent than I had time to pay, and I often heard his

descanting upon the progress of this acquaintance in terms which convinced me that he was making rapid steps towards intimacy with one member of the family especially.

"But you keep to the rule you have laid down for yourself, at table, Martyn," I said, one day, in talking of these pleasant visits.

"At present I have," he replied. "But I can tell you, Pattie, it is extremely difficult—more so than I had ever anticipated that it would be."

"Does Alice never help you?" I inquired.

"No; there lies my greatest trial. I can tell too, plainly, that Alice not only despises me for it, but thinks me wrong."

"Is it possible they think so still?"

"Yes, all of them."

"And their visitors too?"

"All who think the subject worth talking about. I have not met with one who held a different opinion."

"Not one?"

"Why, yes; there was a poor raw youth at table one day—I feel sure he had been a shoemaker—he *did* take up 'the cause,' as he called it. I could have thrown my empty glass at his head, for identifying himself with me; and both of us together with a *cause*. I don't think I shall stand it long, Pattie, if they go on in this way."

"Yes you will, Martyn. You know there is no glory in doing what is both easy and pleasant to us."

"Glory! I should like you to show me the glory of sipping cold water amongst gentlemen, and being made the butt of the company."

"There is a glory in it, Martyn, to you—and you know there is."

"Yes, in one sense there is; but if Alice thinks me a milksop—a poltroon?"

"Never mind, she will know better soon."

"Soon? What do you mean, Martha? You are not going to tell her?"

"I wish I might."

"Not for your life, dare you!"

"Yes, I dare, if that be all. I dare do anything to save you that is right."

"Martha, hear me this once. If you do disclose my

weakness and my shame to Alice Fielding I will cast myself away at once, and you shall see me, from that time, the most abandoned outcast upon the face of the earth. Besides, why should you? Am I not living the life of an anchorite to please you?—holding on beneath a perfect storm of ridicule and abuse? Where is my shame now?—where is my weakness? Why, you would be the most wanton, as well as the most cruel of torturers, if you should choose this time, of all others, to disgrace and ruin me.”

“I have let you talk on in your own way, Martyn, because I am sure you know that I am neither a wanton nor a cruel tormentor.”

“Then you will keep my secret, Martha?”

“That depends upon circumstances.”

“What circumstances?”

“Whether you keep to your better resolution or not. I promise you so far. Is not that fair?”

“Perhaps it is. But you know, if they should persuade me to deviate, there could, even then, be no use in telling any one here that I had ever gone too far.”

“We shall see. Beyond what I have already promised, Martyn, I will not pledge myself, and you need not ask me to do so.”

“Well, Pattie, I suppose I must submit, as I know by experience that you possess the stronger will; and as a proof how good I am, I will confess to you, that if Alice thought like you—if she had not that strange crotchet of her father’s, about the thing being wrong, it would be a great help to me. If I could only turn to her for one approving look, I should care no more for what the other said than for the wind blowing past me.”

I felt very sad when Martyn and I had parted, after this conversation, because I knew his natural want of firmness, and the vast importance he attached to the good opinion of those whom he admired, or loved, all which impelling influences seemed now combined against him. He said right that the approving smile of woman would have given him additional strength under such circumstances; but I doubt very much whether he did not in reality shrink with more wounded feeling from the idea of being looked down upon by gentlemen, than from any pain which it was in the power of woman to inflict. Altogether, I am persuaded that

his mortified vanity greatly exaggerated the "persecutions," as he called it, which beset him on every hand in the circle to which he was now introduced, and where he was rapidly becoming the favoured recipient of much kind attention. The subject itself was one which perpetually galled his feelings, he had so much to remember of a painful and humiliating nature in connection with it. Thus he very naturally flinched at the slightest mention of it, and no doubt construed into hints and slights a thousand allusions never intended for the subject itself, and still less for him personally. I knew that the habits of Mr. Fielding's family, and those of his guests in general, were too much under the restriction of good manners, for anything like persecution, to annoy any single individual at the table; but I knew also, as Martyn became a more frequent and familiar guest, that the liberties taken with him, while only playfully intended, became more forcibly and freely directed, as well as more individually applicable.

From the same weakness, and want of moral courage, which constituted my brother's ground of danger, I believe he never fairly and manfully argued the subject out at Mr. Fielding's table, as he should have done. This would soon have placed him in a more easy, as well as a more honourable position. Instead of which, he treated the matter lightly himself, jested upon it, played with it, and thus gave no one the idea that he was really in earnest. I was fully able, afterwards, to see that, in this conduct of my brother's, there was great excuse for those who rallied him upon what they had no reason to suppose was more to him than a mere whim. I cannot believe of Mr. Fielding especially, that he would have suffered any young man to be ridiculed at his table for acting out a principle, however erroneous he might think that principle in itself. As such, and believing it to be wrong, he would have treated it seriously, and in private. But there were others, who were at once less feeling, and less scrupulous, and they were more likely to do the actual mischief, while the minister and his daughter were only the lookers-on.

We heard much in this circle of a Doctor Brown, a man of great learning and eminence in the religious world, as well as a man of remarkable philanthropy. He was no narrow-minded ascetic, Martyn said, when describing him

to me, as he had heard him described by others; but a leader of all measures likely to do good to the people at large. Especially the whole town had to thank him for the establishment of a kind of literary institution, intended for the benefit of the young men of the place, whose time, during the day, was occupied in business. Under the able patronage of Doctor Brown this institution had extended its limits, and risen in respectability, until of late it had become a favourite resort both of ladies and gentlemen, who attended the lectures delivered there on popular and general subjects—sometimes connected with the sciences, sometimes with literature, or the fine arts.

It was generally considered that no man had been, or could be a greater benefactor to the place in which he lived than Doctor Brown. Moreover he had written a work on the Prophecies; and while he entered with lively interest into matters of science and even of taste, his highest distinction was as a biblical scholar. He was also great upon the education of the people, held strong views upon religious teaching, and indeed on most of the leading questions of the day; and especially on such as had a direct spiritual tendency, he was considered high authority.

Martyn and I had made up our minds, and it would be impossible to say why,—that this wonderful Doctor Brown would be a very dry old personage to us; but we carefully kept our sage conclusions to ourselves, and breathed not a word in disparagement of the great man amongst his numerous admirers. We were promised the privilege of being introduced to this gentleman; and on a given day were invited by the Fieldings to meet at their house a very select literary and religious party, amongst whom the expounder of the Prophecies was considered to be the great attraction.

Not having had a day's relaxation for some time, I felt rather inclined to join the party. Alice begged that I would, for it was one of gentlemen almost entirely; and she asked my support and my services she said, as she would those of a sister.

The first great event on joining the company was for Martyn and me to be introduced to Doctor Brown; and our astonishment was great not to find him the old hard-looking man we had expected, but a middle-aged gentleman

of pleasing and polished exterior, possessing a suavity of manner which enabled him to glide smoothly and gently from one subject to another; rather as if feeling his way or waiting his time, until something should be touched upon calculated to give him sufficient power over the feelings of his auditors, to make it worth his while to display those wonderful powers of conversational oratory for which he was remarkable.

Had Doctor Brown singled me out for the bestowment of any special mark of favour, it is quite probable I might have thought him, as so many others did, the most delightful and captivating man in the world. As it was I thought I could detect a lurking sneer in his smile, and a proud glance in his eye, which repelled me more than any of his high qualifications could attract. And yet all this gave him power—a strange power over others, which it needed the combination of many Christian graces to enable him to use properly. I felt this power operating upon me from a distance, and had no inclination to be brought under its more immediate and potent influence.

While I sat apart wondering whether it was the silvery voice of this accomplished man which made him so popular, I observed that my brother was the object of his favourable regard. Nor was Martyn repelled like me. At all events, if he had been so at first and while distant, he was now within the charmed circle, listening, I could see, with riveted attention, and responding with almost as much intelligence and grace as the speaker himself.

Alice Fielding observed, as I did, the earnest conversation in which both were engaged; and bending down her head towards me, she said in a half-whisper, "I have so much wished this interview to take place. Your brother could not have a more suitable, or a more able friend than the Doctor."

I looked at Alice while she spoke. That beautiful and tender blush was in her face which always made her more than lovely. Why, I wondered, had *she* so much wished for the interview? Why had *she* thought and planned with solicitude for my brother? I think she noticed my inquiring look, for her colour deepened rapidly; but soon there was a movement towards the dining-room, and as we separated, our attention was called to other things.

I suppose my brother and I enjoyed that day a very high privilege in the company we met; and I must say, the conversation was worthy of the guests. Mr. Fielding himself had a delicate skill in drawing people out; and the manner in which he selected his company, saw them placed, and led them into conversation, was the principal cause of his parties being considered more than commonly agreeable.

On that day I discovered that mine were not the only eyes which watched my brother with admiring interest. Alice found many opportunities of looking in the same direction, though her glance was more furtive than mine; and once when Martyn, who sate near her, was asked to pour wine into her glass, I saw her give him a look almost of dictation, while she said in a low tone which was yet sufficiently audible to him and to me,—“You *must* drink wine to-day;” and the manner in which she spoke implied that she considered his respectability, his standing, or the favour he might be regarded with, in some way implicated in his conforming to the customs of the table. I also gave my brother a look; for while the other gentlemen were very earnest upon some favourite theme of conversation, we could both look and speak in a kind of aside manner, without interrupting the discourse, and even without being observed.

Martyn answered my look with a smile and a nod. He poured wine into his glass, raised it to his lips, but did not taste. I understood his meaning and was satisfied; the more so that I felt that was no time nor place for bringing our peculiarities of habit into prominent notice.

So soon as it was possible to leave the table, Alice and I made good our escape, glad enough to enjoy the free range of the drawing-room and the garden without restraint. For some time we amused ourselves with the children; and when summoned in to coffee, we had a pleasant chat about our old school days, and the companions whose characteristic traits we each helped the other to recall.

When Alice had arranged everything ready for the coming in of the gentlemen, a servant was sent into the dining-room to indicate by a signal to his master that coffee waited. As this servant opened the door of the dining-room, I happened to be walking along the hall, for I had been up stairs for my work. My brother sat at that side of the table

against which the door opened, and as some peals of laughter had been very loud, and Martyn was looking extremely grave, I could not help pausing — unconsciously, at the moment—to observe the unusual expression of his countenance. Scarcely ever, in my life, had I seen it more cloudy, more defiant, and at the same time more distressed. What could be the matter? The silvery tones were speaking; and the faces of the other gentlemen, two or three of whom I could see from where I stood, looked exceedingly excited, pleased, and intent upon what the voice was saying. The glance I obtained was so momentary that I could distinguish nothing more, nor could I possibly form any idea of what was the subject of such intense interest. I thought I heard something about the “gallant leader of the Coldstream Guards,” and then peals of laughter again, and then the door was closed, and I went on my way.

In another moment, I could tell by the sounds that the door was thrown open. I glanced timidly back, thinking the gentlemen were going into the drawing-room, and wishing to speak to my brother about the time of our leaving. To my astonishment it was Martyn himself, and *alone*. Strangely he dashed along the hall, seizing his hat with an impatient gesture, and then opening the front door he went out, shutting it after him with a violence which shook the house.

“What *is* the matter?” said Alice as I entered the drawing-room; but the gentlemen were really coming now, and I had no time to answer.

Martyn appeared no more that evening. Mr. Fielding asked for him more than once, and Alice, I thought, looked disappointed and annoyed; but the expounder of the Prophecies took no notice whatever. Even when Mr. Feilding, drawing near to him, said in his quiet, gentle way, “I am afraid, Doctor, you were rather too hard upon our young friend,” the Doctor made no answer, but taking up a book from the table, entered learnedly into the peculiar construction of a Greek sentence, which had lately been put forth by a divine almost as profound as himself.

CHAPTER XVI.

It is scarcely necessary to say with what restless anxieties my waking and my sleeping thoughts were beset that night. I do not know that I feared the very worst that could happen to my brother; because I did not know what had passed amongst the gentlemen in the dining-room. I learned afterwards that my poor brother had had to bear singly, and with no constitutional courage or firmness, the full battery of that wonderful satire for which Doctor Brown was so remarkable, that partly from its poignancy and force, and partly because of his acknowledged superiority, it was seldom that any one was so bold as to attempt to oppose him. This occasion, however, had been one of those when argument—cool, rational argument can do but little. The whole company were of one way of thinking; and while they held in their hands, and tasted with their very lips the practical materiality of the Doctor's skilful advocacy, there was but one young man, a comparative stranger, with his flushed face, irritated temper, wounded sensibility, mortified pride, and his glass of cold water, to bear the brunt of cutting sarcasm and sportive raillery, rendered doubly telling, as all such weapons are, by the loud applause and louder laughter of a party of gentlemen enjoying their after-dinner pleasantries. What could poor Martyn do alone? He had first laughed, then parried, then argued gravely; but the number and force of his opponents, rather than their cleverness, completely baffled, while their united laughter confused and irritated him. What could he do? He left them in a violent and indignant rage. What else he did the future too clearly revealed.

I had gone home alone, stealing out like a guilty person, with only a whispered "Good night" to Alice, who looked almost as uncomfortable as I did, though she knew nothing of the cause which weighed down my spirits. I went alone, because Martyn was to have been my companion, and I wanted no other. I would have given almost anything I had in the world to find him that night—to talk to him, encourage and soothe him. But he lodged at a great distance from Mr. Gardener's, I knew nothing of the

people of the house, and at that late hour the thing was impossible. So I went to my solitary chamber and consoled myself, in part, as I had so often done before, by prayerfully commending him to the keeping of that gracious Father, whose tender mercies I felt were so much more to be depended upon than those of man.

Still I could not sleep more than a few minutes now and then; and when I rose in the morning, the duties of a governess felt very difficult and uncongenial to me. Mr. and Mrs. Gardener rallied me upon my jaded looks, and said, jestingly, they thought the gaieties of dissipation did not agree with me.

About noon that day, there came a note from my brother. I was obliged to go up into my own room to open it, for there my quivering fingers would be unobserved.

The note commenced in his most familiar strain of playfulness. I do not think I liked it any better for that, or was in the least degree consoled by his apparent gaiety. "I write to comfort you, my dear Pattie," he said, "for I know you are always too anxious about me. But never mind, this time—there is no harm done. Last night, I confess, I was in rather a dangerous condition, and I did what had better be forgotten as soon as possible. All is right this morning, however, and nobody knows—not a soul beyond myself, and you. But, Pattie—and now my dear old woman, you must bear with me—I tell you honestly, I cannot stand this teetotalism—no man could in my position—I defy them to stand it. Why, I was the butt and the scorn of the whole company last night. I believe I hate that Doctor Brown from the bottom of my heart. After all, what I write for, and what I want you to consider, Pattie, is my present safety, while taking just a little—only enough to keep the people quiet, and to prevent myself being a general laughing-stock. Nor is laughing all. What do you think Mr. Fielding said to me, in his grave quiet way? I shall never forget his words, nor the force with which they fell upon me. I had laughed until then, like the rest, but I laughed no longer. He said, 'Your determined abstinence is almost enough to make anyone think you cannot control yourself; and as a friend, really as a friend, I should advise you not to bring upon yourself this unpleasant suspicion.' So you see, Pattie, I am going

to show them all now, that I *can* take wine like other men. I have learned a good deal, you know, by what has passed; and I have gained a good deal of strength, too. Beyond this, I have lost the inclination. I have been quite happy without it, and never was in better health in my life; so that I begin again with every advantage, and if I should by any accident go one step too far, I promise you, most faithfully and solemnly that I will give it up again entirely. And now, Pattie, to be a little more serious, for this is a grave subject to us both—God only knows how much so to me—I will confess to you candidly that the religious character of these people has influenced me a good deal in the conclusion I have come to. I don't want them, or you either, to suppose me a 'converted character,' as the canting folks have it, because I am not; but I have lately, especially since my illness, thought a good deal more than I used to think, and I may say I have become convinced, as clearly as anyone can be, that without the help of God, we can do nothing to save ourselves eternally. Would you believe it, Pattie, your silly, weak, sinful brother, has sometimes felt this so forcibly, that he has even ventured to pray—very humbly you may be sure—that he may not be shut out from divine mercy for ever. I think too, sometimes, that God has heard this prayer, and in bringing me acquainted with these good people—with one angelic being in particular—he seems to be answering me continually. Again—He is answering me so kindly—so pleasantly, I could weep tears of gratitude when I think of it. This is the genuine language of my soul, dear Pattie. Don't anticipate more from me than I have avowed. Above all, don't triumph over me, I say again, as if I was converted: but that I know you won't. Now comfort your kind heart, my dear—my best of friends, and rest always satisfied that your brother is safe; not from any extraordinary strength that he possesses, but because he has learned so much from the past."

The last portion of this letter I read upon my knees—a second—a third and a fourth time over, still upon my knees. I felt as if I would never rise again until a blessing had been promised. There was strength and consolation in the act itself, and I rose refreshed, if not assured; for I saw that unless God would work a miracle in favour of my brother, he must, under such influences as society was

now exercising upon him, still be lost. But God *had* wrought miracles—why not here? “His grace is sufficient,” I said to myself a thousand times; and then again the strong conviction pressed upon me, that while the great duty rests with us of using, according to our ability, the best means; if we neglect these, and madly rush into temptation again and again, after repeated warning, and reproof, and merciful preservation from many dangers, it is little less than blasphemous to cry “Preserve me yet again,” while plunging into the same pitfall of destruction.

So strong, rapid, and violent was the quick succession of these bewildering thoughts, that I believe I should have lost my reason in the struggle, only that there came to me, as I believe there comes to all, that sweet consolation which fervent and continued prayer imparts—yes, even when the good so prayed for is denied. Thus, if not hopeful, I was calm. I will not say that if my brother was not saved, I was myself; because I have never dared to breathe a word of presumptuous confidence on things so deep and awful; but I still believe that the heart-rending discipline through which I passed while alternately hoping and fearing for him; and, above all, the habits I now acquired of submission to the will of God, and prayerful trust in Him, and Him alone, produced an effect upon my own soul for which I had more cause to be thankful than if the world had heaped upon me the richest of its bestowments.

In the next note which my brother sent me there was no trace whatever of the seriousness by which this was characterised. It would seem as if all had passed away like a dream; but I knew his natural gaiety and elasticity of temperament too well to attach much importance to the fact. He had told me not to anticipate, not to triumph. I was little disposed to do either; but remained for some time humbly thankful for what had been gained, without venturing to look for more.

The purport of Martyn's second note surprised me a good deal. He was going to dine with Doctor Brown. That gentleman had called upon him; and from the manner in which the call was mentioned, it seemed as if his powerful skill in fascination had not only entirely removed my brother's prejudices, but actually won him over to become one of the Doctor's warmest admirers. So much for the flattering notice of a popular man!

It seemed to me very probable that Doctor Brown thought he had something to make up to my brother; that he had carried his raillery too far, and had given pain where he meant only to elicit sharpness of repartee. He was a man who had no harshness or malignity in his nature, at least nothing of the kind was ever exhibited by him. In his flattering and exalted position it was scarcely likely that it should; but he could not resist an opportunity for making anything appear ridiculous, which stood forward prominently opposed to his opinions and his practices. That he was a lover of after-dinner enjoyment everyone knew; though it is most probable that in the whole course of his life, he had never been charged with excess. That he made better speeches with wine than without was a fact equally well known; and there were few persons, if any, who could have bound him to abstinence, if they must thereby lose the high gratification to themselves of his social and conversational eloquence.

The Doctor, it must in charity be remembered, knew nothing of my brother's peculiarity of character or liability to temptation. He had been, we afterwards learned, much pleased with his quickness and evident ability in conversation; and observing in him the little peculiarity of not drinking wine, which it was impossible he thought to account for on any rational ground, he had first begun to rally him for the sole purpose of bringing out his shrewdness in reply; and then, carried away by a natural tendency, not by any means peculiar to him, had shown the company how he could hunt down his game, without in all probability entertaining the slightest idea of the dangerous amusement he was pursuing.

But the principal reason why Doctor Brown took pains to cultivate my brother's acquaintance, came afterwards more fully to my knowledge. The literary institution already spoken of was almost entirely dependent upon him for a succession of popular lectures, calculated to keep up sufficient attraction for a genteel and liberal audience. In no other way could the expenses of the institution be maintained. The learned doctor himself delivered some of these lectures every season. But he was a very politic man, and must not exhaust himself upon so common a field. He knew too that younger men, even if less highly gifted—men who

were newer upon the stage, even though less accomplished actors, would sometimes succeed in drawing a large audience; and to this honourable post he had settled it in his mind, that he would invite Martyn Bond, if on a more close and careful examination of the young man's qualifications, he should find him capable of filling it with credit.

It is true that Martyn was but little accustomed to this kind of thing. I do not know that he had ever so much as spoken in public, except in the most desultory manner; neither had I when I first heard of the proposal, the slightest idea that his qualifications would be found equal to any given subject. I had always observed in my brother's mind an extraordinary versatility, which seemed sometimes as if it made all topics of discussion equally easy to him; and I knew also, that he possessed that rare and valuable gift, by which some persons in merely glancing at an object or a book, manage to obtain more knowledge of it than others who have examined or read it through. All this I knew; but still, though secretly proud that my brother should have been invited to deliver a lecture, I was not quite sure that he would be able, for the first time at least, to acquit himself to general satisfaction. Doctor Brown, I thought, was so profound a scholar, that Martyn's quick and superficial way of treating everything would never please him. I forgot, what the learned man knew perfectly well, that those who came to hear the lecture were few of them Doctor Browns.

My brother's introduction to society was soon followed by invitations more numerous than was possible for him to accept. Friends appeared to spring up on every hand, and marks of favour and distinction were showered upon him, sometimes from the most unexpected quarters. A run of what is called good fortune, always had the effect upon Martyn, of making him particularly humble, amiable and kind. I never knew him more so than about this time. His heart seemed opened to none but agreeable impressions, and their reflex influence upon his countenance and manners, might well render him attractive to a girl like Alice Fielding, who, though accustomed to see a great deal of company, seldom, as it seemed to me, had allowed herself to form any intimate friendship as she now did with me, and through me, with my brother. I was a good medium

for both, and though I dared not, under present circumstances, look forward to a more intimate connection, and consequently, most scrupulously abstained from using any instrumentality, or even management, calculated to forward such a result; they were both so dear to me, that I was always ready to fall in with whatever was mutually pleasing to them; and they both eventually became so dear to each other, that my services as a medium were no longer required.

But I must not anticipate. Martyn was at this time all that the most anxious and devoted friend could desire. It is true he conformed to the habits of society; but the very fact of his doing so under some degree of fear for himself, perhaps also under some degree of concern for me and my feelings, made him so scrupulous, that even I should have been ashamed to charge him with any tendency to deviate from the strictest line of propriety in this respect. Alice, I could see, was much better pleased that he should not be singular. Mr. Fielding, it was evident, considered him as having laid aside an objectionable error; while society in general, and the gentlemen with whom he dined, in particular, welcomed him amongst them now as one of their own order; no longer a cold, unsocial being, seated at their tables like a spy upon their proceedings, or an alien and a stranger, by whose ungenial habits they were silently condemned.

Such, indeed, was the great esteem to which my brother rose at this time, that I believe he might have obtained almost any situation for which he had been a candidate, in the place where we lived. If the gentleman to whose employment he had been recommended by Mr. Henley really knew his former weakness, he kept his secret well; for though at first I was under daily apprehension lest some unfavourable intelligence to this effect should transpire, by degrees, and as time passed on, I became more fearless, and confiding; especially, when before the expiration of six months my brother's salary was raised by the voluntary act of his employer, and he was at the same time promoted to a position of greater dignity and trust, with a hope held out to him that this was but the prelude to farther advancement.

Strange, indeed, would it have been had I troubled with

any gloomy forebodings of mine, so pleasant and so prosperous a state of things. Always hopeful as I was, I sometimes thought, even now, that my views might have been too limited, my restrictions too severe. I did not then know the real nature of that malady which I had so often to fear in my brother, but which I was always only too glad to believe had become weakened in its hold upon his constitution, or might be warded off by other means, and especially by happier influences than the enforcement of a singular, and, as it seemed to him and his friends, a *degrading* physical, as well as moral law. In my reasonings, and in the conclusions at which I endeavoured to arrive, I overlooked the fact, that the malady itself was physical as well as moral, and had two strong peculiarities. In the first place, it was a sin only in degree, in which respect it does not differ from covetousness, and some other sins; but that which distinguishes it expressly from all others is, that when extending beyond a certain degree, it overthrows the entire framework of the reasoning functions, so that, just in proportion as that nice line of safety has to be distinguished and observed—a line which no man living ever yet was able to lay down for another, or for himself for two days together—just as every power of discrimination, and every moral sense—all energy, all force and firmness of character, are most necessary, to stop the impetus of physical impulse and animal desire—just at that critical moment the reasoning powers have become deranged—ever so little it may be, if there is urgent need to stop, there is danger; and danger implies that the citadel is yielding, that the ramparts are giving way, or that there is treachery within. And then, if we look to the moral powers which, under all other circumstances, are the great protectors, these especially are just so far gone over to the enemy as they are linked in with, and made part of, that good will and cordiality, that generous and kindly emotion, that forgiveness of injury which thrusts out the hand to all men—in short, that sickly, maudlin, and spurious benevolence which makes so many of the poor tempted inebriates feel *better* in proportion as they are less sober and less sane.

I have said, that in the true knowledge of the malady, and its peculiarities, I was, at the time I write of, but a novice, and I believe my brother himself was not much

wiser. It is scarcely possible in youth to understand all the symptoms of the disease, and consequently its remedy. Time teaches us in this respect "a deep lesson." It was teaching my brother and me slowly, very slowly; for—I repeat the fact—he never in his life was more scrupulous than now. At all the tables where he was received his temperance and moderation were remarkable. He never, in the excitement of a public dinner, or in the enjoyment of a private one—never, that I heard of, went beyond the line of scrupulous propriety. He had a great motive for the restraint; and at present he was reaping all the good effects of total abstinence, for the desire itself had become weakened; so that when he first began again to live like other men, he was in reality under no temptation to transgress the rules of good society.

Under these favourable auspices, my brother's first public lecture was delivered. It was on an ordinary and practical subject which did not admit of much display of oratory. There was a large audience, before whom the speaker acquitted himself well. I remember less what he said than how he looked. I had never, as I thought, seen him so handsome, and so gentlemanly before—a little flushed with the excitement of the occasion, but altogether bright, happy, and self-possessed. As he went on with frequent interruptions of applause, though there was little beyond his appearance, voice, and manner, to be delighted with, I could see that he gained confidence, and then came sparkling forth some of his odd views of common things, rendered piquant by his humorous expression; and then the company thundered their applause; and then he went on again more fluently than before, winding up at last with a fine period, evidently made up for the occasion; after delivering which, he bowed gracefully, and retired. I think the last sentence was something about light being let into the mind as well as into the house. The lecture had been in some way connected with the subject of light as necessary to health, and the conclusion which this naturally suggested, of mental light being equally necessary to the health of the inner being, though, perhaps, as common-place as any that could have been laid before the company, produced such unanimous and continued clapping of hands, stamping of feet, and plumping down of sticks and umbrellas, as I dare s

my brother had never expected to have produced by any oratory of his, nor had I expected it for him. There could be no doubt it was his fine figure, his clear, handsome, countenance, his manly voice, and the genial look and cordial manner which, when pleased and gratified, he always wore—it was these combined, which gave him so sudden and unexpected a popularity as a public speaker, that other gentlemen besides Doctor Brown became solicitous to engage his services for a large proportion of the lectures to be given during the coming season. Martyn had very prudently declined pledging himself for more than he knew he could accomplish satisfactorily. His time was not his own, and beyond this, he knew better than to exhaust his comparatively slender resources, so as to leave an impression upon the minds of those who heard him, that he had told them everything he knew himself, and perhaps a little more.

CHAPTER XVII.

ALICE FIELDING and her father were both present when Martyn delivered his first lecture, and both were extremely gratified. I had accompanied the Gardeners, and was seated where I could not see them; but I afterwards heard them express their satisfaction in terms of the warmest approbation; the praises of the daughter only tempered by the growing interest which I was able to detect in many signs of feeling, which she unconsciously betrayed; and if, in no other way, I should still have read, as I imagined, its deepening tenderness in the faint blush which flitted over her cheek whenever his name was suddenly mentioned, and which now began to assume a warmer tinge; at the same time that I saw it once or twice ebb back again, as it were, into an ashy paleness, when she listened to, or even apprehended anything at all disparaging to my brother's character or fame.

It was impossible, as I watched these indications of a sensitiveness, extending beyond the usual tone of even womanly feeling, not to think sometimes, and to think painfully, what would be the result, what the measure of

that feeling, if Martyn should become more dear, and should then again transgress. I wished now—oh, how earnestly—that I had told Alice all in the first stage of our acquaintance. Yet how could I have told her then, for on what plea could I have volunteered the exposure of my brother's shame? Sometimes I longed to tell her even now, and then again I thought—why should I? Was he not leading a most exemplary life, in all respects, so far as I knew, conforming to the most approved notions and habits of society? What, in fact, was there to tell; and why should I, of all human beings, attempt to darken his pleasant prospects, or to throw a barrier of separation betwixt him and the one being in the world, whose influence made those prospects not only pleasant beyond expression, but at the same time almost sure?

Still, though I held myself in no way bound to make the disclosure—still, the thought of the growing intimacy between Alice and my brother troubled, almost as much as it pleased me; and still a sudden impulse sometimes seized me which hurried me along to the very verge of telling all.

I believe I might have told a great deal without Alice being in the slightest degree shaken in her favourable opinion. She was, as I afterwards discovered, one of those who cannot see a fault in the object of their love, unless something extremely gross and shocking is revealed, and then such persons, for the most part, love no longer. Besides which, Alice Fielding really knew the world so little, I think she knew human nature less; she herself, and all her family, lived so entirely out of, and above all gross and grovelling associations; by their habit of judging, bad people were to them either all good or all evil; so that those most terrible of all temptations, which are so interwoven with the physical nature that they cease only to be such when the heart ceases to beat, those temptations, against which a warfare fiercer than ever stained the battle-field has to be waged, even in the secluded chamber, by the social hearth, and sometimes at the very altar itself—of such strong impulses to evil, it was utterly impossible for her to form even the faintest conception; and unless I had painted my brother's character and conduct in colours far darker than he deserved, I should not have succeeded in producing the slightest impression upon her mind of a

nature calculated to place her, as I wished, in some degree upon her guard.

I have said that Alice knew little about vice, and scarcely dreamed of such a thing as temptation to it assailing any one within the select circle in which she and her father moved. But she was very quick to notice and condemn every little deviation from the conventional rules by which the circle of their associations was bound in and made secure. To be absent from any of the appointed services of religion, was to her an act of delinquency almost as unaccountable as it was deserving of condemnation; and one Monday evening, when I had taken my work for the purpose of sitting with her alone, she turned towards me with a look of grave concern, as she said—"Your brother, I think, was not out last evening?"

"No," I answered, "he was not."

"Perhaps he is ill?" Alice suggested.

"I said, 'I believed he was perfectly well.'"

She looked even more displeased than before, and I then observed, "You attach great importance, I think, Alice, to regular attendance upon public worship?"

"Of course I do," she answered, looking up at the same time with a wondering expression, as if unconscious what my meaning could be.

This was one of my moments of temptation. It was in the twilight of a soft autumn evening. The moon had just risen, and the air was so still and mild, that we sat at an open window which led out from a pleasant sitting-room upon a lawn. Nature, with her soft soothing influences has often much to do in opening our hearts as well as our lips, and luring us on to say what we should never think of uttering amidst the tumult of the elements, or whilst shivering in a wintry blast.

"Alice," I said, pursuing the subject we had begun, "do you not think persons may sometimes spend the hours of public worship even more profitably to themselves in private devotion, than in the midst of an assembled multitude?"

Alice shook her head. "We owe," she said, "a duty to our fellow-beings, as well as to our Heavenly Father. Where one person remains at home for conscience' sake, there are millions who absent themselves from the worst of

motives. The next thing after avoiding evil, is to avoid the appearance of it; lest we should be stumbling-blocks in the way of others, or should place temptation before them."

"And did you never," I asked, "apply this rule to that scruple of my brother's, which I think you have been at some pains to induce him to give up?"

"I induce him to give up a scruple? What can you mean?" said Alice.

"With regard to his taking wine," I answered. "Suppose for an instant," I went on, "suppose Alice, that my brother had a particular weakness on that point, and was liable to fall into danger from excess?"

"I know of but one cure," said Alice, not at all apprehending any truth in my allusion; "I know of but one means of safety for any of us under any temptation, whatever its nature may be."

"You allude," I said, "to that saving belief which is set before us in the Holy Scriptures."

"I do," she replied.

"But suppose, Alice," I said, "you had a father, a brother, or perhaps a husband who had great duties to perform, and was really anxious to fulfil those duties aright, and was yet liable, constitutionally, to a disorder which occasioned temporary blindness; would you not adopt physical means to prevent the blindness coming on? Would you not consider a little singularity, adopted on account of this blindness, more than justified by the end to be obtained in the performance of the great duties?"

But while we were talking Mr. Fielding entered the room, and I changed the subject of our conversation with the less regret, that I found Alice had no more idea of my real meaning than if I had all along been speaking to her in an unknown tongue. In another moment the youngest of her brothers and sisters burst in upon us with their kisses and good-nights. Alice always went up-stairs with them to see them comfortably laid in their beds, and Mr. Fielding and I were then left alone in the twilight.

I know of nothing much more uncomfortable than the sudden silence which sometimes ensues after a boisterous party have retired, leaving two persons together who are not particularly at home with each other. The presence of Mr. Fielding had not the least unpleasant effect upon me

when Alice was with us, or when there was other company; but from some cause or other it was quite different when we were alone. Perhaps I had then some vague apprehension that he would begin to talk about my brother; that some unfavourable reports might have reached his ear, which he would seize that opportunity of communicating to me; or that he would ply me with questions which I should find it impossible to answer satisfactorily.

This occasion was marked by a most ominous beginning. "Miss Bond," said the gentleman, "I have been wishing for some time to ask you a few questions respecting—respecting your family."

I breathed again when he said family, for I had felt sure he was going to say my brother; and I asked what the questions were.

"You are not," said Mr. Fielding, "related to the Bonds of Northamptonshire, are you?"

"My father lived in Northamptonshire," I said, "about three miles from the town of L——."

"You surprise me," said Mr. Fielding. "I knew a Mr. Bond—Samuel Bond, I think his name was. I knew him in early life, and his wife too. She, I think, was a Miss Martyn."

"That Miss Martyn was my mother."

"Astonishing! I thought—I mean I understood the Mr. Bond she married had been a man of large property."

"He was so considered," I replied, smiling. "Your wonder, I suppose, is, that his daughter should be a governess?"

"The office of a governess is a very honourable one," said Mr. Fielding, with his usual politeness; "none can be more so. But I hope nothing at all disastrous occurred in your family?"

"Oh, no!" I replied, "nothing very extraordinary in the way of money matters. You know people are often not really so rich as they are supposed to be. It was so, I believe, with my father. I think too, he had some losses in the way of business; and there was a chancery suit pending at the time of his death, of which I have never heard any particulars."

"And your brother—the young man with whom we have the pleasure of being acquainted?"

"He was left very much in the same circumstances as myself."

"An engineer I think his profession is?" Mr. Fielding asked, and now I began to tremble again.

"With whom, may I ask," he went on, "did he learn the business of an engineer?"

"First," I replied, "with an uncle of ours."

"And then?"

"With a Mr. Henley."

"Henley?" exclaimed Mr. Fielding: "was he associated with Henley? I don't wonder now that everyone thinks him so capable. But why did he leave Henley?"

I felt the colour blazing in my cheeks, but happily the twilight prevented its being seen; and I answered, I hoped not falsely, "that Mr. Henley had no further occasion for his services. But," I added quickly, for it was the only pleasant thing I had to say—"it was Mr. Henley's recommendation which obtained for him his present situation."

"Indeed!" said Mr. Fielding. "I should have expected something better from Henley's recommendation; especially when your brother's talents are considered. But I have no doubt he will rise, or rather *is* rising. I suppose if there was something better in prospect for him, he could still be sure of Henley's recommendation?"

I answered, that I believed he could, though to what that better prospect alluded, I could not imagine. And thus, without further betrayal of my brother, the conversation was closed.

I learned, afterwards, that Mr. Fielding, for reasons of his own, had made enquiries of Mr. Henley respecting my brother, and that gentleman having heard repeated favourable accounts of Martyn from his present employer, and deeming it the kindest, and consequently the best thing he could do for him, to tell all the good he knew, without the evil, he had spoken highly of my brother's talents, disposition, and general character, without once alluding to the unfortunate circumstances under which they had separated.

Thus all things seemed to be tending the same way—"To the establishment of my brother's fortunes," most people would have said. I was not slow to hope it might be so, for as yet I saw no reason to fear, unless it might be that now and then my close suspicious glance detected

a something—I should have been wholly at a loss to say what, which caused a sudden question to flash across my mind, whether Martyn was not habitually *fortifying* himself again, it might be against cold—it might be against fatigue, for the winter had set in with severity, and he was again engaged in business which took him frequently about from place to place in wet and stormy weather. That which struck me most, I think, was this; that while indefatigable in serving his employer, he seemed to read nothing, to get nothing done for himself, or for those lectures which I knew he had been engaged to deliver. But then, was he not in love, as the case very clearly showed itself at this time, and might not all these symptoms of neglect be charged upon that absorbing passion?

I think Christmas was always an eventful time to me, or rather to those in whom I was most deeply interested. It was at that social season this year that my brother ventured to avow his attachment to Alice Fielding. He was not rejected altogether; but of course he could not be received as an acknowledged lover until some preliminary steps had been made in a satisfactory manner; one was his establishment in a prosperous business; the other had more to do with his own state of feeling, and his religious profession. Of neither of these facts being eventually accomplished, did it seem to me that either Mr. Fielding or his daughter entertained any painful degree of doubt: both, perhaps, appearing to them to be in the most hopeful state of progress. So little do those who lead their peculiar kind of life, who are shut up within the conventionalities of so narrow a circle, really know of the human heart, except under their particular view of it; or of the wants and weaknesses of human nature, except as studied through one medium deeply tinged by the colouring of their own sect or set.

Had I really known or even believed that the admission of this attachment would have proved a root of bitterness in this excellent family, I think my sense of duty would have supported me through the painful task of stopping all preliminary steps, and crushing my brother's fondest hopes even in the first flush of their vitality and their joy. It would have been a difficult thing, no doubt; for a happier man, I believe, did not walk this earth than Martyn, on the

morning of that Christmas-day — the first day which dawned upon him as the hopeful and grateful lover of Alice Fielding. We both dined with the family, and though the day was marked by peculiar seriousness in the older branches of the household, it was not the less deep and pure in its enjoyments for being so. In the evening, Martyn had so much spare cheerfulness upon his hands, that he gave himself up for some time to the children, with whom he was always a great favourite, and even Alice and I joining in the general merriment, became children like the rest, and laughed and romped as if we had no grave business even now upon our hands—no gathering shadows over our future path.

Of neither were we sensible, nor for some time after this happy and auspicious day. Martyn, as might have been anticipated, became again most scrupulous. I think at this time he would have given up both food and sleep, had such a sacrifice been required, and if he could have lived without them, for the sake of pleasing Alice, or procuring her a pleasure. If she had only known, under these circumstances, the importance of asking just one other kind of *giving up*? But she did not, and her blind ignorance both of the need of the sacrifice, and of its *value*, just stamped the character of my brother's habits at this turning period of his life, with an impress too deep for any merely human hand to eradicate.

Martyn was now a frequent guest with the Fieldings, spending so many hours, from some plea or other, at the house, that I could not wonder when I heard Mr. Gardener complain respecting the lectures, that my brother had to be excused time after time. Besides which, being a beautiful draughtsman, and always willing to oblige, he had engaged to make for Mr. Gardener a series of anatomical drawings, to be exhibited on the occasion of his own lecture, the time for which was now drawing very near. In vain I urged upon my brother the importance of fulfilling this engagement, as well as the great gratification it would afford me if he would bestow a little pains upon obliging Mr. Gardener in this particular. He promised again and again, but when I called at his lodgings to enquire after their progress, the drawings were not then begun. I was mortified for Mr. Gardener, who was always extremely

kind both to Martyn and me; and so pained at the idea of my brother being the cause of so annoying a disappointment, that I took the drawings away with me, and did my best to execute them myself, though not without sitting up through many hours of the night, during a whole week previous to the lecture.

Nor was this the only instance of Martyn's culpable neglect. As days and weeks passed on, it became imperative upon him to take up one of the many subjects to which his name and promise stood affixed; and as the season advanced, and fewer nights for the lectures remained, it seemed as if Martyn would have to speak almost every time, if he really meant to fulfil his promise or even a part of it.

"But what can I do?" said he, when I reasoned with him one day on the subject. "I have literally nothing ready."

"But why," I said, laying my hand gently on his shoulder, and looking steadily in his face, "Why, Martyn, have you nothing ready?"

I think he shook off my hand—I know there was a repulsive gesture on his part, and a look upon his countenance which I could not forget. He seemed to recollect himself immediately, and spoke more gently than he had looked a moment before.

"Let me see," he said. "What are the subjects? I suppose I must try what I can do to-morrow night."

We glanced together over the subjects, but so many of them required reading up, so many wanted diagrams for illustration, so many one thing, and so many another, all which Martyn had not ready, that it seemed absolutely impossible for him to speak on the following day. At last he said, "I have it: I will volunteer a lecture on 'The character and works of Robert Burns,' I dare say the company will like that as well as anything that is put down here. Don't you think they will, Pattie?"

"Perhaps the company may," I answered, "but you have the committee to consult."

"Oh!" said Martyn, with, I thought, but a feeble attempt at his usual gaiety; "I can manage the committee. Besides which, they can't help themselves; they must have such a lecture as I propose to give, or none at all."

The committee, I believe, had no strong objection to the change of subject, or perhaps, as Martyn had said, they could not help themselves; and thinking "The character and works of Burns" more generally interesting than much that we had lately listened to, we all went in good spirits to the lecture, and found in the room an extremely crowded audience.

I cannot say that I entertained any fear about Martyn not being equal to his subject to-night, because I knew it to be one in which he was very much at home. I knew, too, that he had a clear and retentive memory for all those little characteristic traits, snatches of sweet songs, and touches of pathos, so abounding in beauty to all the genuine admirers of this poet. But I did wonder, after all, what he could make of his subject morally and religiously; for it was one of the understood rules of this Institution, patronised as it was, that no lecturer should be allowed to address the public, whose own mind, to say the least, was not strongly impressed with religious feeling.

I did not think my brother looked, on this occasion, nearly so handsome, so clear in the expression of his countenance, nor so happy, as on his first public appearance in the lecture-room. Perhaps he was not well. There must surely be some physical cause, for never were his circumstances more agreeable, nor the influences around him more auspicious. Never was hope more cheering, or the future more rich in promise. Alice Fielding and her father were seated immediately before him. He could not look directly forward towards his auditors, without meeting her mild, approving eyes. What could he wish for more in the way of encouragement? Perhaps it was that he felt embarrassed, that the mild eyes were too much for him. Whatever the cause might be, he did not either begin so well, or pursue his theme with so much cleverness as I expected; and I sometimes almost feared a total failure. It was too evident he had spent upon it no previous study, that he just dealt with it in fragments, as it presented itself to his own mind at the moment; and but for the redeeming nature of his peculiarly touching and beautiful repetition of favourite passages of poetry, I believe that many of the audience, like myself, would have been greatly disappointed.

Towards the close of the lecture, however, Martyn entirely recovered himself. I know not what change of feeling came over him, nor how the powers of his heart and mind were set at liberty to expand and express themselves. It seemed almost as if the inspiration of the poet had entered his own soul. His very countenance became illuminated, his eyes brightened, his lip quivered, but it was not from faltering or hesitation—rather from the burden of deep thoughts which it trembled to deliver. He had come to that point in the poet's history when his besetting sin, as an intemperate man, had to be touched upon. He did not flinch from it, but rather painted it in strong and living colours, stained with agony and tinged with shame. But while he spoke of the *temptation* in this way, to the *man* he was tender as if he knew the rankling of the poisoned arrow in the heart, too well himself, to lift up *his* voice in condemnation.

But the most striking portion of this almost passionate address, was when in conclusion, and after describing the depth of the fall of such a man, and the magnitude of the loss, he appealed to society for help. I heard his voice tremble as he did so, and then tears gushed into my eyes, and I could no longer see distinctly; but I have a dim recollection of his attitude when he made this appeal, which I believe he did with outstretched arms. And then they were folded back upon his bosom; and with some other remarks, half in apology for his earnestness, he concluded with these lines of the poet—

“Then at the balance let's be mute,
We never can adjust it;
What's done we partly may compute,
But know not what's resisted.”

There was no thundering applause at the close of the lecture that evening. The company seemed to go stealthily away, some wiping their eyes as they went; though perhaps not one amongst them applying the words of the speaker to any practical purpose. Had they each and all laid that subject to their bosoms, and acted upon it in their homes, they might not only have saved my poor brother even then, but hundreds and thousands besides him who were risking the happiness of time and eternity in the same way.

CHAPTER XVIII.

It was after the delivery of his lecture on the works and character of Burns, that I first observed, on the part of Alice Fielding, a certain reserve towards my brother, which not only characterised her behaviour in his presence, but also her manner of speaking of him to me. He had never been received as her acknowledged lover, and his visits at the house were only permitted on condition of the strictest secrecy as related to all intimacy beyond that of ordinary friendship. In accordance with this rule, Alice never appeared in company, or in any of her walks attended by my brother; and there was perhaps no individual in the whole circle of their acquaintance beyond myself, who understood the nature of their feelings towards each other. Indeed, it would have been a great departure from Mr. Fielding's accustomed prudence to have wholly sanctioned such an intimacy in the present incipient stage of my brother's prosperous career. For the sake of his own character, therefore, as well as for many other reasons, he evidently did not wish it to be known how much he had yielded to a kind of personal preference for the young man, a preference which Martyn had the power of almost universally inspiring in persons of widely different minds and modes of judging. In justice to the father, too, it must be remembered that he had traced out my brother's just inheritance of an honourable name; and had obtained in his favour the clearest testimonials which a man of high standing in the world of business could give. Time was to do for him all that might be wanting beyond this, and Mr. Fielding waited the issue without being troubled by any very alarming degree of doubt.

Alice Fielding waited too, but she watched as well as waited, and so did I. We neither of us spoke to each other at this time on the subject of our observations, nor uttered even in moments of the closest confidence one word of our fears; but I saw the shadow falling more and more heavily upon her pale brow; and when I would sometimes have looked full into those deep soft eyes, they either turned

away or fixed their glance upon the ground, so that I could only guess from the weight of the eye-lashes that

— Their lids were charged with unshed tears.”

I knew not what to do or say, for there was nothing definite in my feelings to which I could have given language; and Martyn did not help me, for now I saw him but seldom. He was busy, he said, with some great undertaking of his employer, and spent very little time except upon the field of operation. He seemed to me, whenever I talked with him, to be warding off some anticipated enquiry, and endeavouring to beguile himself as well as me with excuses and pretexts which had no solid hold upon his own convictions. I feared he spent less time with Alice than might have been expected, and this surprised and perplexed me more than all besides. But the truth became clear enough at last; it burst forth in a way we should least have anticipated.

There was yet one lecture to be given—the last in the season. Martyn had been excused so many times that he could not be permitted to escape now. Doctor Brown waited upon him in person, first on behalf of the committee, and afterwards as a friend, to urge upon him the advantage to his own honour, his character, and his position as a gentleman of talent and integrity, of making one decisive effort, though now at a late hour, to redeem what he had lost. Many other gentlemen called upon him for the same purpose, all with the kindest and best intentions, and rather for his own sake than for those of the Institution. I learned afterwards from Mr. Gardener, that they were determined to get him back again amongst them, for he had scarcely visited of late at any of their houses. Sometimes on one plea, and sometimes another, he had excused himself at the last hour from almost all their parties; and he was too great a favourite, too genial an acquaintance, to be lost to society in this manner.

Mr. Gardener, who was one of the most really interested of all my brother's friends, pleaded with him very earnestly on the subject. It is probable that he alone of all those who had recently derived so much pleasure from Martyn's society entertained a lurking suspicion respecting him; but he communicated nothing of this kind to me, and I ~~was determined~~ to hear him one day express his pleasure in

having, as he said, brought my brother to reason about the lecture, and obtained his promise to deliver the last of the season.

"I hope it will not be on a subject requiring much study," I said.

"Oh! no;" replied Mr. Gardener. "It is almost more than half my own, I shall help him out myself with the practical details, I only want him to do the eloquence for me. But chiefly I want him to show himself again—to let every one see that all is right with him. We cannot afford to lose him, you know, Miss Bond."

I looked full towards Mr. Gardener as he spoke, but could discover nothing definite in his meaning, though *some* meaning I felt sure he had. Nothing more however came to light, and the evening of the lecture drew on.

I believe it had been intended by many gentlemen of the place to offer Martyn both welcome and encouragement by their presence, and their applause that night. The room was again crowded. I went alone, for Mrs. Gardener could not leave home, and her husband, as he had promised, was busy on the platform, arranging certain geological specimens, which were to illustrate the facts we had met to hear explained.

I seated myself in the very front of the lecturer's table, and the room was soon filled as usual. I wondered whether the Fieldings were there; and hoping they were, I ventured to steal a glance almost around me, upon the assembled company. At a little distance behind me, I caught one glimpse of Alice, seated beside her father. In recognition of my glance, she nodded, and smiled; and though extremely pale, I could see a look of pleasure in her face which I had not observed there for many weeks.

For some time we waited in a state of agreeable expectation; for though the lecturer had not appeared, Mr. Gardener was so busy with his preparations, and he looked perhaps so much more busy than he really was, that we felt no manner of doubt but that we should spend an hour of deep interest in listening to what was to follow. At length a door opened through which persons passed and repassed to and from the platform, or stage. Could *that* be my brother? My first impulse was to utter some exclamation of surprise, but such a sharp agony shot through

me, that in another moment I felt as if chilled to stone. Perhaps no one saw so distinctly as I did what was the matter—certainly no one looked with such watchful and observant eyes. Was *that* my brother?—that dark—herrid—But I will not attempt to describe. He came staggering forward, and he laughed, and gibbered as he bowed to the company. I heard their tittering. I do not think they knew at first but that he was in one of his droll moods, and was intending to make them laugh; people are so slow to believe, even the evidence of their senses, when entirely opposed to their previously settled convictions; and that Martyn Bond, the graceful, gentlemanly young man, should commit himself in so public and so gross a manner was perhaps as far as anything could possibly have been from the previous calculations of his friends.

I have often wondered how it was that people could forget, or fail to note the minute details which mark the period of enduring some great agony. It was never so with me. I saw exactly what Mr. Gardener did, and how he looked at his strangely bewildered companion. There was sharp anger as well as intense mortification in the expression of his countenance when he turned towards him, and rather pushed him back, while endeavouring to place his own person betwixt him and the company, and thus he began the lecture as well as he could.

Once or twice I saw him turn his head quickly towards my brother, and then to the door, evidently telling him to go out; but there stood that mopping, mowing spectacle, intent on making a speech. Soon there began to be great confusion amongst the audience. Ladies and gentlemen left the room. Mr. Gardener looked more and more distressed. At last he fairly grasped Martyn by the shoulders, and thrust him through the door, closing it after him. Mr. Gardener then began to speak again on the subject of the lecture; but it was of little use, so many of the audience had taken their departure, some at last, I could tell by the sound of their feet and the sweep of ladies' dresses, in a hurried and frightened manner, as if they rushed from some spectacle of fear, as well as of disgust.

I had never looked round to observe who left the room, and who remained; having as little inclination as power to do so. I sat perfectly still, staring straight before me, not

knowing what I looked at, nor why I looked at all. All at once I became conscious that I was left alone upon a long seat, those near me being completely empty ; and still I sate there, staring—speechless—almost insane. No one came to my assistance—I was only a governess, and I was *his* sister.

Mr. Gardener, fairly baffled in his attempts to detain the company, began to pack up his geological specimens, preparatory to leaving the place. He had supposed himself to be alone, but when he saw that I was there, he beckoned me to go and assist him, and I rose and went mechanically towards the table beside which he stood. "This is a bad business, Miss Bond," said he, in a kind of under-tone, "I am afraid we shall all have to give your brother up. I confess I have lately had my suspicions about him, but I never dreamed that he would expose himself in this way."

I could not speak—I had nothing to say. Perhaps Mr. Gardener thought I could not feel either, for he continued in the same strain, without I believe having the slightest wish to give me pain, until all the articles were packed, and we were both ready to go. One thing yet remained to be ascertained, what had become of my brother? So when all was ready, I looked into Mr. Gardener's face, and stammered out, "Where is he?"

I suppose there must have been something written in my countenance which told more plainly than words what I was enduring ; for Mr. Gardener started, and then, after regarding me for a moment, he took my hand, drew it within his arm, and led me away, saying, as he did so, "He is perfectly safe. I ordered him to be taken care of, and he has gone home in my chaise. So you and I must walk. I dare say you won't mind."

I assured him I should not, and he led me out into the street, past several groups of young men who stood about the door of the lecture-room, some of them laughing and talking about what had just taken place ; and I then learned for the first time that the report of my brother's disgrace in his last situation had reached this place, for some of the talkers were expatiating upon this fact under exaggerated and distorted forms.

Finding what was the nature of their discourse, my companion hurried me past these loitering groups faster than I

knew how to walk, only that he encouraged and half supported me, thinking, no doubt, that this rapid motion in the open air would restore me to myself better than the tenderest sympathy could have done. In this way we reached his house, where he again supported me up the stairs, all the way to my own chamber, which I had no sooner entered than I shut to the door, turned the key in the lock, and, clasping my hands upon my forehead, fell upon my knees, with my face buried in a chair which stood beside my bed.

How that long night passed over with me it would be impossible to say, nor is it desirable that I should attempt to do so. Many nights followed after this which were little less poignant in the anguish of their long, wakeful hours, and many days which I would willingly have exchanged even for such nights, because then I was alone, then I could pray in secret; and though there blended with my prayers none of the consolations of hope for my poor brother, there fell at last upon my own broken spirit some portion of that sweet calm which I could not in the first shock of my misery believe it possible would ever come to me again.

My duties, too, were at this time a great solace to me;—not the teaching of my pupils, exactly, but the general care of them—the interest I felt in their improvement, and the affection with which they rewarded me. I will not boast of my qualifications as a governess, but I know I was a good caretaker, and as such I believe I was valued by every member of the household, but especially by the little Indian boy, whose feeble health rendered him peculiarly dependent upon me, for helping him through many a dull hour in which he would have been otherwise left entirely alone; for his healthier and happier relatives had no idea of denying themselves any pleasure because he could not share it, and in many of their amusements, as well as their parties and visits, he was unable to take any part.

For some weeks I did not see my brother—I did not wish to see him; but I ascertained through Mr. Gardener that he was pursuing his accustomed occupations; and that his employer, being perfectly satisfied with the services he received from him, did not trouble himself further about his habits, or character, than to ascertain that he was in the field of labour when most wanted, and in the full possession

of his senses, when sense was most in requisition for any definite purpose connected with business.

Next to my brother, the greatest burden now upon my mind was Alice Fielding. I heard of her too, pursuing her accustomed walk in life, and I saw her every Sunday in the distance, for we neither of us wished to meet. I saw her looking, as I thought, almost deadly pale : but I found that the family were receiving and paying visits as usual ; and I knew that I was myself the only person acquainted with that secret which she and her father were thus, in all probability, endeavouring the better to conceal. What it must have been to her to hear, wherever she went, those comments which were sure to be made upon my brother, and made the more boldly and unsparingly from total ignorance of her state of feeling, may be in part imagined, but by no possibility described. I thought of this until I knew not how to bear it, and I longed sometimes, unspeakably, to be near to comfort and support her, as if I had any comfort to propose, any support to offer. It was a case which admitted of neither. She had just one thing to do, and the sooner that was done effectually the better. That one thing was to forget, and in that I was the last person to aid her.

I did not feel offended with Alice that she neither wrote to me nor invited me to her father's house : perhaps he did not wish to see me there. It was perfectly natural, and reasonable, that he should not. Neither did I feel particularly hurt, as if Alice had lost all affection for me, or in condemning my brother had made me a sharer in the sentence. I thought I knew better how the case stood with her, and the future proved that I was not mistaken.

Without any preliminary intercourse, there was put into my hand one day a hurried note from Alice Fielding, in which, without any allusion to our long silence, and absence from each other, she asked me to go to her on a certain evening ; and she was so particular in specifying both the place and the hour, that I knew the meeting was intended to take place in the absence of her father, and unknown to him.

I have not hitherto thought it necessary to describe the residence of Mr. Fielding, because it differed little from many other respectable houses in the neighbourhood, excepting only that it stood a little separate from the town,

and was pleasantly situated beside a quiet river, from which the garden was separated by one small green field, and a kind of grove of walnut-trees close by the banks of the stream. Into this field there was a private entrance from the garden, and Alice asked me not to go to her father's house, but to be at this door at the time appointed.

It may well be supposed how carefully I kept my tryate. When Alice appeared, softly stepping out from the door, I could not help thinking of a nun coming forth out of a cloister. The afternoon sun, now approaching the horizon, was full upon the spot; but even his golden rays imparted no colour to her cheek, which looked only the paler for all the surrounding glow and brightness. Without a word she kissed me as usual, but neither of us spoke. I knew the meeting had not been planned for us to occupy the time in talking of ourselves, or our affection for each other, which I never for a moment believed to have experienced any change. I saw that Alice held a letter in her hand, and so soon as we had reached the grove of walnut trees, and could walk beneath their shade with less chance of being seen, she began to unfold the letter, though with such trembling fingers that I longed to help her, only I thought it best to let her have everything her own way.

It was Martyn's writing—that I saw at once. "I have sent for you," said Alice, "to read this letter to you." And then she began, not with a broken voice, as might have been expected, but in low sweet tones of unusual clearness, as if she had read those words so many times before that every turn of expression was perfectly familiar. She never put the letter into my hand: perhaps she did not read it all to me. I only heard it once, but the words fell deep into my heart. My poor brother! Had I never loved or pitied him before, I must have done both now. His spirit was completely broken; and to Alice he made this once, complete and entire confession of his weakness, and the guilty manner in which he had been mad enough to yield to it, at the very time when every hope he had on earth was dependent upon his self-denial for its fulfilment. Tender as the whole letter was, Martyn dwelt less upon his love than upon his culpability, his ingratitude, and his shame. He asked no favour as a man, still less as a lover; but as a guilty, fallen sinner, he did ask a little kindness, and a little help. The kindness

he solicited was that Alice would pity, if she could not pardon him: the help, that she would devise for him some plan which might afford him a chance of not being utterly, and for ever lost.

"Oh Alice!" I could not help exclaiming.

"Do not reproach me," she said, hastily. "I see it all now. I know where the fault was. My father's table was really the place of his fall, not that terrible lecture-room. But we will not talk of that;" and she actually shuddered, but soon went on again, speaking with a rapidity quite unnatural to her. "I see it all now," she repeated. "It has come upon me with overwhelming force, and I—yes, I am the guilty wretch, not he. I felt I had power over him, and yet, more than once I used that power to induce him to conform to the customs of society, for no other reason than because such *are* its customs; and now, Martha, I have called you here to tell you that, as the least reparation I can make, I must save him, if he can be saved, and you must help me."

"Oh, bless you, my own Alice!" I said, with clasped hands, and eyes from which the hot tears were streaming.

"Yes, we two must save him," Alice went on. "I have promised my father that I will neither write to him nor see him again alone; nor do I think I could do either, even without such promise. But I can think for him, plan for him, pray for him—that is not denied me. In all these you will help me; and, together, there is no saying what we may not do."

I waited to hear if Alice had any plan already formed, for I did not like to interrupt her by questions which might seem abrupt. Almost as if talking to herself she went on. "I have a plan," she said, "for his getting away—quite away, out of this country. A near relative of mine resides in one of the new colonies, and is happy and prosperous there. I could authorise you to write to him in your brother's behalf, and he must sail for that distant region of the world. But first he must bind himself in the most solemn manner to you and me—I will meet him for that purpose, though for no other—he must bind himself in the most solemn manner, just to us two, you know, never to touch that dreadful thing again; and there, where society is so differently constituted, and he knows nobody whom he

could particularly desire to please by rushing again into temptation, I think he will keep his vow—I feel sure he will keep it, when I have made him acquainted with all my part in the compact.”

I was going to speak when Alice anticipated my meaning. “As to the means of his going, we must help him there, too—that is, if he needs help.”

I assured her that he would; and she added, “I have calculated every difficulty, and also every resource. Of course I shall be able to do something, but not at once; and you?”

“A little,” I answered; “all that I can, you may fully depend upon.”

“He must go respectably,” said Alice. “He must not be dishonoured.”

Alas! for us poor blind women—ever blending together our love and our pride. Here were we, actually planning for the honour of one who had so recently gone grovelling downward, dragging us along with him, even at the very time when woman’s love, and earthly exaltation, and heavenly glory, all wooed and waited for him in the upward path. But we thought not of this: we had no grudge against him; and so, with what slender materials we had, we set about building up, not his respectability alone, but his honour; and so pleased were we with this great work, so happy and intent upon the husbanding of our resources for the accomplishment of this good object, that the evening sun went down upon our consultations, leaving us under the shadow of those old trees to trace the dewy foot-path no longer moistened with our tears. Such consolation is there to be found, even in the deepest anguish of despair, from an earnest, upright, onward struggle to do good.

CHAPTER XIX.

It is not necessary to dwell upon the intermediate time betwixt this interview, and the first accomplishment of those plans which Alice Fielding and I often afterwards met to consult upon. Not that I ever again became openly a visitor at her father's house. I respected the feelings of both too much for that; but there were occasions when Alice and I could hold free intercourse together, and this was not unfrequently the case in what was called my room at Mr. Gardener's. It is just possible that the family in which I lived suspected the secret of my friend, but I believe they never betrayed it, and throughout the whole course of this, my long trial, Mr. Gardener acted towards me the part of a true and faithful friend. Especially in one respect he served my brother and me more effectually than we should have ventured to hope that he would. I have before stated that Martyn and I had a small sum of money reverting to us from my mother's fortune. This was so' invested as to be wholly unavailable for any purpose of immediate use, except by the tedious process of certain legal proceedings, which neither Martyn nor I should have been able to institute, or carry on.

Mr. Gardener, however, had a brother settled in London as a solicitor, and to him the whole affair was committed, but on such terms, and with such kind and judicious management on the part of Mr. Gardener, that we were spared every possible expense which could be done without, and found ourselves in the end the possessors of more than was necessary for my brother's purposes. Here again Mr. Gardener acted for me the part of a prudent adviser and faithful friend; for instead of allowing me to obey the dictates of affection by throwing the whole into my brother's hands, he insisted upon securing my portion for myself, and allowed only what was reasonable for my brother's immediate need.

Of course much time was consumed in making these arrangements, though not more than Alice and I found the means of filling up with those labours of the hand which

fall to woman's share, in the business of providing for convenience or comfort. Through the long summer months, and often in the early morning hours, we both plied our needles almost as diligently as any poor seamstress in the place; so that before the winter set in, my brother was carefully provided with everything which the most tenderly cared-for member of a respectable household could be expected to possess.

All this while my intercourse with Martyn was chiefly by notes, and messages. I think he rather avoided than sought my society, and to me there was more pain than pleasure in meeting him; for his final vow had not yet been made; and though he kept on at his employment with great regularity, I never, in the secret of my heart, felt sure of him for a single day. Alice and he had never met. I had communicated to him all her plans and wishes, and though at first I could see it was a terrible blow to him to be sent entirely out of the country, he became in time thoroughly convinced, like us, that it was not only the best thing for him, but the only thing.

Alice Fielding, after all, was but a woman. I loved her the better for being so. One hope she could not withhold from poor Martyn. It was that if he kept his faith, if he succeeded in entirely conquering his besetting sin, if after the lapse of years, he could return to her a thoroughly reformed and altered man, the past should be all forgotten, and he might then, if he desired it, claim her hand. She said the opinion of no other human being would then guide her in deciding for the future. She would see him herself, and judge for herself. Moreover, she would depend upon his integrity. She would implicitly believe the statements he would from time to time send home to me respecting his own life, and conduct. What could any woman promise more? What more could the most devoted lover demand?

One would have thought, with this prospect before him, grounded upon the promise of a woman, whose very soul was truth, it would have needed no verbal promise urged upon my brother to induce him at once to abstain, and for ever. One would have thought that of his own free will and purpose he would have commenced at once that course of life, which was to lead him eventually to so much happiness. And yet I knew, what Alice did not, that he

was putting off, as people put off an evil day, the commencement of this course of life, making the long-delayed interview a plea for dallying with his enemy, until the mere verbal compact should have passed his lips. I could read what he was doing whenever I looked into his eyes, on those few occasions when we met; and though I believe that during this period of suspense, he never once committed himself so far as to become the subject of remark to any one else, yet my convictions were the same—that he was not actually abstaining, and from this cause entirely I avoided seeing him more than was absolutely necessary. Perhaps, like him, I also put off the day of hope, trusting to that last interview which Alice promised, for sealing the new compact, and making it sure for life.

If it was permitted to any of us to enjoy the opportunity of calling back a lost friend for one short interview—a friend whom we had consigned to the grave in brokenness of heart; and if after such interview we must see them no more, I believe we should none of us be in haste for the meeting, but should rather put it off from time to time as if by way of keeping some treasure yet to come by which the future would be made more rich than it would ever be again after that one happiness had been enjoyed, and thus expended.

In this way I think it was that we all agreed to put off that last interview. I have said there were tedious legal proceedings to be gone through, which, though Alice and I thought little of them, Mr. Gardener insisted upon having all thoroughly settled, and secured, before he would hear of my brother leaving the country. Thus the summer passed over, and though we had fully expected my brother to sail before the autumn, yet even the winter months came on before anything was ready, and a suitable chance secured for his proceeding directly to the relatives to whom Alice took care that he should be introduced, if not actually recommended.

It seemed to me as if Christmas day was again to be the crisis of my brother's fate, as it had often been an eventful period to me. The vessel in which his berth had at last been secured, was to sail from London on the twenty-sixth, and it would therefore be necessary for him to spend his Christmas day in London. I regretted this the less,

because he had so forfeited all claim to be received as a welcome or honoured guest, with any of the respectable families with whom we had been acquainted, that I knew not at what hospitable board he could find a place, without casting a shadow over the social scene. Sad thought! I know of none more sad. We are accustomed to think our bitterest tears, and our most sorrowful lamentations, legitimately bestowed upon those who have exchanged the home of childhood for the churchyard grave; but to see one of the once-loved members of the household circle still here, and to wish them away, to loath their presence, to feel that they darken the spot of earth whereon they sit, put out our fire, extinguish our mirth, and paralyse all our efforts to be genial and kind,—oh! these are the truly lost; and this is the real misery of a broken family circle.

So I at least was not sorry when Martyn told me he must spend his Christmas day in London. I think he knew and felt why it was better that it should be so. Alice expressed no regret, and probably she also shared my feelings. But the time had come alarmingly near now when we three were to meet for the last time; and all seemed to wait with trembling anticipation for the interview, almost as if after that there would be nothing more to do on earth. At least it was so in a great degree with Alice and me. With Martyn, life was then rather to begin than to close.

The time fixed for our meeting was the last evening before Christmas day. Mr. and Mrs. Gardener, with their children, always spent that evening at the house of the lady's mother, where they met a juvenile party, and seldom returned before a late hour. With all my recent preparations for my brother's comfort they were perfectly acquainted. I had numerous boxes and packages of clothes, books, and other things for him, almost filling my room; and this night all must be ready at a certain hour, for he was going to travel at midnight to London. All was ready—not a thing seemed wanting. Alice and I should have planned, talked, and worked to very little purpose, if possibly contribute to his comfort or his respectability for the future. And those fair hands which at first excited his passionate admiration, what had they not done?

We both seemed to grudge the task to any hired assistant, making with our own fingers many articles of comfort, many of ornament, both for home and person, which, until we tried, would have appeared to us impossible for female hands. It was a labour of love—and oh! how faithfully discharged!

I do not think, generally, that men appreciate this kind of labour, at half its real value; perhaps it is impossible that they should; but I did see, once or twice, as I watched him with a sister's pride, that Martyn looked no less pleased than astonished at our wonderful ingenuity, forethought, and patience. Besides which, there was a beauty, I thought, in all that was done, a method, regularity, and almost purity, so strikingly characteristic of Alice herself, that any one who knew her might have guessed the preparations were in part her handiwork. I think Alice must have been naturally proud. I know she thought nothing too good, no material too costly for my brother; and often, when I hinted that I thought some inferior article would be equally useful, I found she had purchased the superior one with her own money.

Martyn and I were busily employed fastening on directions, when we heard the soft step of Alice on the stairs. He started to his feet in a moment, while a burning colour rushed into his face. Alice allowed him to take her hand and lead her to a chair; but there was at the same time that in her manner which plainly said, "We meet as friends, but nothing more." He felt the impassable barrier which he had himself fixed between them; and gently falling in with her wishes, did not attempt to go beyond.

We had but a short time for our interview—short compared with the vast and endless future which might hang upon those golden moments. As usual, when each fragment of passing time is of inestimable value, we sate in silence for awhile. We did not weep; we had no time for tears. Alice was the first to speak. I think she was the most collected and calm. All her experience had been one long lesson in self-mastery; and her voice, one of the clearest I ever heard, was seldom shaken by emotion. Those transparent hands of hers betrayed the most by their frequent trembling. Even now they quivered in her lap, so that Martyn was tempted—and no wonder—to take one of them

in his : indeed, he soon sunk down upon his knees beside me, and grasping a hand of each of us, looked up into our faces with such imploring agony of soul—such utter brokenness of spirit, that I involuntarily drew one arm around his neck and bent my forehead upon his, blending my tears, for I *could* weep then, with those which began to start from his eyes.

But Alice looked straight onward. She had a burden upon her soul which must be discharged—a mission which must be carried out. And thus she spoke, with her deep eyes still averted, for I think she could not bear to look into my brother's face, and we both tried to hush our very breathing, that we might not interrupt what she had to say.

I cannot repeat the words which Alice spoke, but I know she went directly to the point of my brother's great weakness, and she took more than her full share of blame upon herself, as being the chief occasion of his last fall. She stated clearly and decidedly her deep and unalterable conviction, that for him there was but one path of safety. She rather took this for granted, as a fixed and irrevocable conclusion with us all, than argued upon it to convince us. Time must pass, she said, long years of trial, it might be of temptation, but we would pray for him ; and night and morning we would ask of the blessed Saviour to take him by the hand, even as a chastened child, and lead him tenderly into a happier and a holier way.

I saw, when she had spoken for awhile in this solemn strain, that maidenly modesty was working within her breast. Yes, even then, the faint blush came and went ; but her deep soul trembled not ; her purpose was immoveable ; her promise had been uttered first to the great Searcher of hearts. What was it now to utter it to man ! Thus she conquered her momentary shame ; and even in the same clear voice went on to pledge herself, by all the truth of woman's love, that if, after the lapse of years, he should come back to her, having kept his faith, she would then become his wife, independently of all other considerations, than the single fact of his being worthy of her affection and her trust.

It now remained for my brother to give utterance to his part in this solemn compact ; and, still upon his knees, still with a hand of each of us clasped closely in his, he breathed that vow to which we both involuntarily uttered our amen ;

and then, the great purpose of our meeting being accomplished, we all three wept together. But the tears we shed were not those of sorrow, altogether; certainly not those of bitterness. Had we been put to the test, I believe we should every one of us that night have laid down our lives for the others. But life is seldom asked for by the gracious Giver of it, at the hands of those who love. There were other tests to be applied. Were we all three of us prepared to abide the trial without wavering; without yielding in the end?

I was myself the first to break the stillness of this solemn interview, by calling attention to the less serious, though still urgent demands of the passing moment. Alice rose with me to adjust some little matters connected with my brother's personal comfort. I observed that he buried his face in the chair from which I had risen, leaning his head upon his arms, and never once looking up, or appearing to heed what we were doing. At last, he suddenly sprung to his feet, and, stretching out his arms, said, "Alice!"

We both turned towards him. He looked like a being on the verge of insanity. "Alice!" he repeated, with his eyes fixed rigidly upon her face, "Go with me. If you love me, go with me!"

I looked involuntarily at my friend. Her eyes were raised to his, with deep meaning, and over her soft cheek there came that blush of womanly feeling, rising and swelling up to her very temples and her calm brow, until her deep eyes flashed light, and an almost more than human resolution seemed to tremble on her parted lips. It was but for a moment. The temptation passed—the emotion faded with the blush it had excited; and nothing but an ashy paleness soon remained, with a blue tinge about her mouth and temples, like that of death itself.

There was no need for her to speak. That sudden and appalling evidence of strong and firm denial told enough. Motionless as a statue she stood fixed in the same attitude, only that her head drooped gently forward, and her eyes began to close. Martyn had sunk down in despair; he could not strengthen or support her. I took her gently in my arms, and would have placed her on a couch; but we all started, and life—such life as it was, came back to all; for there was the loud bell—the summons for our

separation ; and when, and where, and how were we to meet again ?

I will not attempt to describe those hurried adieus which alone remained for us to breathe. My brother was the first to leave—his time was fixed—his circumstances admitted of no delay. Porters and messengers, with bustling urgency, soon rushed into the room, to gather up and tear away, in rude and boisterous haste, all that we had been weeks and months so tenderly preparing. It was a wholesome, though most unwished-for check to our emotions, from which we had but partially recovered when, all the loud business being transacted, we had again one moment of sweet quiet ; and then, linked in a last embrace, we breathed our sad farewell.

It was a melancholy privation to Alice and me that we could not spend that night together. In another half hour she must leave me too. We sat close to the dying fire, hands clasped in hands, and listening to the wheels of every carriage that passed by, though we knew my brother would not leave till midnight, and it was not yet eleven. We did not say much to each other—nothing about the future, or the past. We only spoke of the night, the wind, the packages, the distance to the station, and the train by which Martyn was to leave at midnight. We did not even mention his name, but spoke as people do when a death has just taken place in the house—of anything and everything except the one ever present and overwhelming fact.

We agreed together what we would do exactly at midnight. We would open our windows, and listen to the roll of the train. And thus, as if these small details were everything to us, when in fact they were nothing, we parted. A carriage had been ordered for Alice. A trusty servant was sent with it, to conduct her home, and no one knew but that she had been spending with me an evening of ordinary and familiar enjoyment.

CHAPTER XX.

UPON Alice Fielding devolved the duty of telling her father that my brother had actually left the country. The circumstances under which he left being entirely conditional as regarded herself, she probably never explained; nor did he question her farther. Seeing from what his daughter had escaped, there can be little doubt but Mr. Fielding was too well pleased with this termination of the unfortunate intimacy, willingly to revive a subject of which no single trace remained calculated to afford pleasure to a parent's heart. Nor was Alice reluctant to allow this impenetrable veil to be drawn over the dark sad past; but, as if anxious to render it yet more obscure, or rather to baffle the curious eyes which might have looked too narrowly into her inner life and feelings, she fell again into all her accustomed duties, and walked apparently with cheerfulness along her accustomed path, as if no storm had swept over it—as if no flower which adorned it had been scathed by the lightning's flash. I alone, perhaps of all her friends, perceived the deep traces in her altered countenance of those struggles of feeling which she knew so well how to conceal from common eyes. She seemed to become suddenly older—older by many years; and I believe she felt so: but I had no reason to suppose that she was unhappy. Indeed, we both experienced that peaceful calm—that rest of the tired spirit which follows the performance of a great and arduous duty. We had done our part, and, so far as we knew how, had done it faithfully. The rest was with Him who alone could add the blessing still necessary to render our efforts successful.

Those who give themselves earnestly to one duty, however, generally find that others spring up to claim their attention, almost before the first is fully discharged. It was especially so with Alice Fielding, and she was called to labour in a service from which but very recently she would have turned away with loathing, if not actually with horror. I had looked at first, perhaps too closely and too narrowly, to the mere saving of my poor brother, as the work to which

we two were called. I now began to see that, let the issue in his case be as it might, a work of pure benevolence was yet to be carried on, even by our poor instrumentality, which would not necessarily be the less owned and blessed of God, if others should be saved, and my brother eventually lost.

Thus Alice and I busied ourselves, and strengthened each other, in constantly endeavouring, when we could do so unobtrusively, to bring over our friends and those with whom we had influence, to see the importance of adopting those domestic and social habits which we believed might be the happy means of saving many who were constitutionally weak like my poor brother, from a life of misery, and a death of shame.

Without any argument, or any persuasion of mine, Alice Fielding had become converted to my way of thinking on this subject, entirely by what had transpired within the sphere of her own observation, and her own painful experience.

"I now see clearly," she said, as we talked the subject over "that it is not a mere vow, a promise, or a pledge, which can bind a firm and manly spirit. Such an one requires no artificial aid, and would naturally spurn the useless bondage."

"But to the weak," I said, "I still think it may be useful, and has been proved so to an almost incalculable extent. With the ignorant and unreasoning too, it operates as a useful check, just at the point of danger. Such persons seldom use their minds so far as to reason, especially when just arriving at a crisis. They are for the most part influenced by momentary impulse, and their moral sense is so low, that they need all the artificial helps which can be afforded them."

"After all," said Alice, "the great work to be done rests with society. Let society, or a large portion of it, only agree to dismiss this temptation from the table, let it no longer form an essential item in the provisions of hospitality, nor an every-day indulgence to those who meet around the social board, and the disease will be prevented from ever obtaining a hold upon the constitution in those early stages of life when it is not only possible, but easy to prevent it."

"I have often wondered," I said, "how it would be, if

there was some article of food which, though pleasant to the taste, was not necessary to our health, and respecting which we knew for a certain fact that it destroyed thousands of our fellow-beings, sent other thousands raving mad, made other thousands imbecile, useless, degraded, and vile—for it is the peculiar nature of this low indulgence of which we speak, to excite the most disgusting, cruel, and ferocious passions, just in proportion as it overthrows the reason—I have often wondered what mother would place such food before her son, making it tempting and pleasant to his taste; what father would press his guests to partake of it; what man of enlightened mind would allow it to form a part of his daily enjoyments; what Christian, instead of laughing and rejoicing over the geniality which it might diffuse throughout the animal frame, would not rather weep as he saw in countless atoms, mingling with its sweets and its excitements, the heart's best blood-drops of the early lost,—the crimson horrors of that burning shame which goes before the drunkard to his nameless grave."

"And we poor helpless women," said Alice, "must sit here useless, paralysed in this great work, because we are women, and therefore are not listened to."

"If," I observed, "the good work is to be done by men, women can surely help the men to do it. Women are sisters, wives, and mothers."

"Yes," Alice replied; "but the table—it is at what is called the hospitable table, that the mischief is done, when men meet together, and at social seasons, over which women have no power."

"To some extent it is so," I observed; "but there is one thing women can do. Wherever an enlightened man is found, of such high-hearted benevolence, and such moral courage, that he dares dismiss this indulgence from his table, women can do their part, and a large part too, in making up for the deficiency; for there must be no stinting of other comforts where wine is not, no lack of interest and amusement. There must be a liberal supply of everything which can lawfully gratify the taste; an *evident* benevolence pervading all that is said and done; with an accumulation of resources calculated to promote amusement and sociability, such as women are much better qualified than men for providing."

"I wonder," said Alice, "whether there is any such table to be found upon the face of the earth?"

"Let us make it our business in life," I said, "to find or to establish such. Women as we are, much may sometimes be done by the persevering and strong application of humble means to a great end."

"Ah, but my father," said Alice, "I can make no way with him. He fears so much the substitution of what he calls *moral* means, for the only real means of salvation."

"But," I replied, "we are not presuming to suppose that protecting people from temptation and vice, is really undertaking the great work of saving their souls."

"Then," said Alice, "to use my father's words, what is the use of what we do at all?"

"You might ask him in reply," I said, "what is the use of law? If placed at the head of a people whom he had to govern, I think even he would not attempt to govern without first constructing laws, and enforcing obedience to them; yet all laws are purely moral in their nature. I think even he, as sole sovereign or governor of such a people, would not remain satisfied with only preaching to them the great truths connected with man's redemption, and his title through belief in the Saviour to acceptance with God. It is not our fault, nor the fault of those who advocate the same cause, that persons choose to charge upon us the substitution of a moral for a spiritual law. The same thing precisely might be said of education. Reading and writing cannot save the soul; but all good people now agree in understanding how the eyes of the ignorant must first be opened to receive instruction, even to read the truths of the Bible; and all this is conducted and carried on entirely upon moral grounds. Religiously carried on it unquestionably may be, and is according to the instrumentality to which the work is committed. Prayerfully carried on, we hope and trust it is, in innumerable instances; but still the work itself is a moral work, as are all our public institutions of a benevolent and useful nature; as well as the regulations we institute in our families for the preservation of order, decency, and comfort. Just as education is religious as well as moral, according to the instrumentality employed in carrying it on, so is this work of ours; and surely if the most earnest prayers can elevate and sanctify a good work, there

never was an undertaking at the same time more dependant upon prayer, and calculated to wring out from the humbled and bleeding heart more fervent supplications for Divine assistance, strength, guidance, and consolation."

In this way Alice Fielding and I derived at times no little comfort and support from freely discussing with each other this all-absorbing subject; we did not mention the name of my poor brother in connection with it. There seemed to be a tacit understanding between us, that his weakness should not be held up by either of us as the framework upon which to hang our arguments or our illustrations. When we spoke of him it was in quite a different sense; as a dear brother from whom we had parted company for a few years, but who was still as much to us as ever, and even as present with us in our intimate communings and in our prayers, as if he had continued to walk beside us along the familiar paths of ordinary life.

But Alice Fielding and I were not long to enjoy this frequent and most endearing companionship. Even before my brother's departure, I had often experienced an earnest longing to escape from a place where it was impossible for me to meet anyone, who if they recognised me at all, did not do so through associations with my poor fallen brother. Martyn had been much more known in society than I was, his character altogether had been much more conspicuous than mine: and the traces left behind him were of such a nature, that I shrunk from the feeling of necessarily, in some degree, reviving them by my presence. Once away from the place we should soon be both forgotten, and Alice and I could still correspond; for though we met frequently in our walks, and in many other ways, I could not derive unalloyed satisfaction from the continuance of an intimacy, which could no longer be enjoyed beneath her father's roof.

In short, I often wished myself away; and repeatedly formed plans for carrying out this wish, without finding the right time, or it might be the right amount of resolution, for laying before Mr. and Mrs. Gardener my intention of leaving them altogether. As sometimes happens, however, a happy coincidence so brought about the desired result, that both parties were more than satisfied with the manner and the terms of our separation.

I have spoken occasionally of a little boy from India, a nephew of Mr. Gardener's, committed to his care and constituting a part of his family. This little boy, from his extreme delicacy of constitution, had been the object of my especial care; and a strong attachment on both sides had very naturally grown up between us. The parents of this child had recently returned from India, with the intention of remaining in England; and they wished to resume the charge of their boy, so soon as they should be able to fix upon a residence suited to the mother's enfeebled constitution. These circumstances Mr. Gardener announced to me, no doubt as a sort of prelude to the arrangements that were to follow; and I confess the prospect of losing by far the most interesting of my pupils, formed no small part in my growing desire to leave the family and the place altogether. I subsequently learned that the two remaining children were to be sent to school; and then Mr. and Mrs. Gardener, who had been invariably kind and considerate friends to me, told me as gently as they could, and I believe with some regret, for I had been very useful to them, that we must part; and I accepted my dismissal without informing them, to the full extent of my feelings, how glad I was to go.

The exact *where* to go did not at that time trouble me, it was so pleasant to feel myself once more free. It was so pleasant too to turn my back upon a place, where if I had learned much I had also suffered much; and that of a nature to induce no pleasant memories—no lingering over the scene of my distress, as we sorrow over the graves of those who are only dead. Ah! how different is such sorrowing from that which tracks the living path of the loved but yet degraded!

I have said that Mr. Gardener had kindly secured for me, yet in a manner available for present use, the small property which fell to my portion on my mother's death. He had insisted upon Martyn appropriating only his own share; and certainly that was sufficient for all immediate wants, especially considering the liberal additions which had been made both by Alice and myself. Thus I felt myself on leaving the Gardeners, a sort of independent person in my own small way; and like many other newly-fledged proprietors of money, my first impulse by way of spending

it with greater facility, was to move about. Perhaps my health was a little shaken by the accumulated anxieties and disappointments I had had to endure; and the very secrecy with which my heaviest burdens were borne, had rendered their weight more galling, and more destructive to all elasticity of mind.

Mr. Gardener, observing this effect upon my spirits, perhaps also upon my health, had often kindly, but still playfully, urged me to try the experiment of idleness, or of travelling—anything, he said to break those chains of thought which had been too long weighing upon my constitution. But, pleasant as this kind of relaxation might have been to one who had friends, or even congenial companions to be idle with, what could I do with idleness alone, or where could I travel in solitary isolation with any hope of finding either benefit or pleasure?

Just at the time when these questions were beginning to press upon me with a kind of painful urgency, Alice Fielding asked me to accompany her to London. She wished to pay a short visit to some aged relative, who always expected from her annually the discharge of that duty; "and," said Alice, in making the proposal to me, "as you seem to be a kind of idle person just now, why should we not indulge ourselves with seeing in company some of the sights best worth seeing in London. It is true, we have no gentlemanly escort; but my aunt sends her old footman out with me wherever I may choose to go, and his company will at least have this great recommendation—that while useful, he will never be in the way."

Having no plan whatever of my own—and I scarcely could have had one more agreeable—I instantly agreed that I would be ready whenever Alice might choose to go, and we set out accordingly on our journey to London together.

In order to be always at liberty to join my friend on any of those occasions when she could command her own time, I took up my temporary abode at a lodging which Mr. Gardener had kindly secured for me, and from thence I could sally forth to pursue any of those plans of interest or pleasure which Alice might decide upon for the day. Nor were we either of us so cast down, or so spirit-broken by the recent troubles of the past, as to be disqualified from taking a lively interest in much that we saw, and enjoyed

together. In any other society it would have been different, but we were so entirely at home with each other, so completely one in our sentiments and feelings with regard to the one absorbing subject on which we thought so much more than we spoke, that each could enter with cheerfulness, nay, sometimes even with enthusiasm upon subjects of a widely different nature, without the other supposing for an instant that that which formed the strongest bond of union between us was forgotten, or remembered only with melancholy and languid interest.

Besides which, we had both been so earnest and so anxious to discharge a great duty, and we had been able really to do so much towards discharging it in the best manner we could devise, that there seemed no reason why we should be otherwise than cheerful; and thus it was, that we entered so heartily into the enjoyment of this brief interval of freedom from harassing perplexity and anxious care.

The long blank which succeeded my brother's departure had now stretched onward into so many weeks and months, that we had begun carefully to calculate the time, I believe up to the very day, when letters from him might be looked for. It is quite possible that tidings of the vessel might already have reached us, had we known how and where to apply for the information desired. But the circumstances of Martyn's departure had been such as to shut us up very much to the keeping of our own counsel, and thus our hopes were fixed upon a letter, and upon that alone.

Before the expiration of our first week in London, we had managed to see so much that I was beginning to think of looking out for some less expensive mode of living; when one day Alice claimed my attendance and advice upon some matters of business which she had to transact for her aunt in the city. I am not sure to what part of the city we went. I think it could not have been far from St. Paul's. All I remember is that we were in a dark kind of shop, and that Alice, having to exercise great care in the matching of some colours for her aunt, went to the door in order to see their different shades more distinctly.

I had scarcely noticed what she was doing, until she returned to me with a countenance so ghastly, and horror-struck, that for a moment I felt as if she must be dying,

and was about to catch her in my arms, when she recovered herself so far as to grasp my hand and lead me to the door. I saw nothing extraordinary but her own face, which I was beginning to look at again, when she pointed with her finger to the opposite side of the street.

What spectacle of horror could be more appalling than that which we both beheld at once! There was no need for explanation now. Words would have been utterly useless to us: we were both silent. I know not what followed, except that before many moments had passed, I found myself pursuing a miserable figure whose slow, uncertain pace rendered it not difficult for me to approach so near as to touch his arm. With a slight gesture of impatience he answered my touch, and walked on, thinking perhaps it was that of some rude boy mocking his shabbiness and misery. The second time I touched him he looked round, recognised my face, started, and staggered back against a wall.

In the busy streets of London human wretchedness may assume almost any attitude and form without attracting notice. The busy feet of passers-by rushed on. My brother, for it was Martyn himself, was not remarkable or singular there; thousands of men like him might be seen in the streets of that great city every day.

"Martyn!" I said, "come with me!"

He had always been submissive to a stronger will than his own, and without answer or question he walked after me, as I went on and on, I knew not whither; until, at last, I found we had reached a long low street of warehouses and gaping archways, where the continual roll of waggons and tramp of horses' feet produced an effect almost as good as silence for enabling me to speak without interruption; for there was no slackening of that roar of heavy sounds and cumbrous vehicles. I do not think I could have endured silence. I wanted this roar and turmoil, this stunning of deep, leaden sounds, to stupify me against that beating of the head and heart which threatened to drive me mad.

Here then, in this long dull street, we met again—Martyn and I—that meeting that should have been so different! Sometimes we paced the narrow and uncertain pavement; sometimes we stood beneath the shadow of some

giant archway; sometimes we stopped suddenly, not knowing what we did, except that above and beyond all other feelings was a strong desire that the earth beneath our feet would open and swallow us.

CHAPTER XXI.

SOCIETY had done its work upon my brother's character. With each successive fall he had lost so much in firmness and self-mastery, that while his remorse became more bitter—nay, perhaps his penitence also more poignant and severe, he was both physically and morally less able to resist temptation.

The history of his late proceedings, which by degrees I elicited, was this. After leaving us on the night when we parted from him with so much tenderness and pity, he found, quite unexpectedly, that a party of young men from the office of his employer were waiting for him at the station, with the flattering intention of accompanying him to London, there to spend with him their Christmas holiday, and to enjoy, as they said, with him the last day they should ever spend together.

Martyn had been a great favourite with all the clerks in this office; but he did not know, he said, until that moment, how much they really cared for him; and, desolate as he was just then, feeling like a banished man sent forth without a friend in the whole world, this unexpected proof of the hold he still had upon the affections and sympathy of his fellow-beings completely overcame him; the more so, as he knew perfectly well that some of those poor fellows had little money to expend upon such an act of generous and cordial friendship. He could have withstood, he thought, a great temptation, but this crept into his heart in so unexpected a manner, softened as it was to almost childish weakness, that he determined the young men should have a happy and jovial day of it in London, whatever it might be to him.

But there needs no minute description of what followed. It was but the old history of this fatal malady under a

a new form. And why call it new? Why feel astonished that any man could have gone forth, as he did, with tears of the purest affection still glistening upon his cheek, with prayers of the most solemn import still echoing upon his ear, with his own deep vow still lingering upon his lips: and then, before a single day had expired, should have grovelled down again even lower than before. It is but the old history of a malady which, after all that the physician and divine could do—all that love could offer, or ambition promise, has a thousand and a thousand times come back upon its wretched victim again under circumstances which, above all others, might have been calculated upon for effectually warding off the attack—such as the day of momentous meeting or appointment, the eve of marriage, or even the hour of mourning after death.

It was but the old history which my brother told. His promise once broken, he cared not how far he went. We should never know, he thought; and if we did, who cared, for was he not a lost man—doomed from his birth to everlasting misery and despair? His agony, when his friends had left him, was greater than could be endured. He tried to drown it in forgetfulness, and went farther and deeper than he had ever done before. For a long time he knew nothing, and when his senses at length returned, the vessel had sailed without him!

At one time he began to husband his resources, to make preparations for sailing in another vessel; but his spirits had so given way under this last fall, that all his energies seemed paralysed, and he could not make the necessary effort. So time went on, he only anxious for the moment how to drown reflection and drive away the horrid thoughts which ever haunted him like spectres. Sometimes, nay often, he stood at midnight upon the old bridge which spans that dark river, with the half-formed purpose of casting himself down into its depths; but this purpose always faded away like all others which he formed—lost, drowned, confused, and blended with the dim workings of a brain which threatened less to make him mad than idiotic.

But the crowning misery came at last; his resources were nearly expended. Then there was the parting with his wardrobe, his books, his valuables, all that had been so

carefully, so lovingly provided for him ; and by those hands too ! *woman's* hands ! It was but the old story.

Suffice it, that my brother and I walked together in that long street, until the night came down, and the yellow lamps began to flare and glitter in our eyes ; and then when I had heard all, I took thoughtfully into account our relative positions, what we possessed, and what each of us must do. Somebody *must* think. How often does that firmness, so falsely attributed to the least sensitive, fall to the share of those who really feel the most.

The result of my thinking was that we would both leave London immediately, and repair to the humble residence of the poorest of all our friends, yet in this sad crisis perhaps the only one who would receive us. I had suddenly remembered old Jane, my mother's servant, and to her I determined to write that very night, to apprise her that Martyn and I would be with her on the following day.

I then thought of Alice, under what circumstances I had left her, and determining to dispatch a messenger to her immediately, I prepared to part with my wretched companion, by placing in his hand a small sum of money, yet sufficient, I hoped, to enable him to meet me in the morning a little more like a respectable man than he looked at present. That he would meet me I felt no doubt, partly because of the hopeless misery of his present condition, which must have rendered almost any means of escape desirable ; and partly that my own natural firmness had still, even under these degrading circumstances, some portion of its former hold upon him. It was an influence which I had always been able to exercise for a short time ; and but for the habits of society, I often thought it might have been extended up to the point of safety. But as experience had too sadly proved, the power of society was too much for me, as most assuredly it was for him.

On arriving at my temporary home I found, to my surprise, that Alice was there waiting for me. She had sent her aunt's servant with a note, saying that she would remain for a part of the evening with me. Instead of the ghastly expression of countenance which had followed her first discovery of my brother's figure, Alice was now calm and self-possessed, though still extremely pale. I had never before, in connection with the sad subject we had now upon our

minds, seen her look exactly as she did at this moment. I even fancied there was a slight *hauteur* in her manner, and a curl upon her beautiful lip which indicated that she felt herself insulted and degraded by what had passed. I had not had time to think of this before, and yet insulted she unquestionably was; for when I came to think of the kind of feeling which she had so generously bestowed upon my brother; the kind of interest she had taken in his welfare, I felt that she was not only grossly insulted, but injured in that way which it is least possible to forgive. My love was of a very different nature. It had not, like hers, been a free gift, but had grown up with me from infancy. Besides which, as my brother, he had a natural right to inflict upon me what shame he chose. I could not escape from it. The whole world might shake him off, but was I not his sister still—sharing his very nature; not only born beneath the same roof, but with the same blood circling in my veins? I could not escape from him if I would. In the secret recesses of my very being he would be ever present with me, for was he not my brother?

Alice Fielding was not of a nature to be twice deceived. I saw and understood the effect which had been produced upon her feelings by my brother's falsehood and treachery to her, even more than by his own degradation. It was perfectly natural. I would not have called back a spark of her lost affection, had it been in my power to do so.

I told Alice all that I knew of my brother's history as briefly as I could. She made no comment; but sometimes by a slight movement of her head, with that curl of the beautiful lip again, I saw that she involuntarily raised herself high above him, casting him off from her, as it were, like something utterly unfit to claim from her a moment's tenderness. She could have loved, I believe, as deeply as most women, and she could have followed, had there been need for it, the man she loved to the scaffold, or the stake; but then he must have been *worthy* of her love.

So we did not converse much, for other subjects would have been inappropriate, and on this we had become widely separated, each having a distinct and different duty to perform. At last Alice rose to go. I thought she had forgotten that I should be far away on the morrow, and might not see her again for an indefinite length of time. But no; lingering

about me as if she knew not how to leave me alone under the pressure of this great misery, she placed her arm around my neck, and, bending down, pressed a kind kiss upon my forehead, at the same time saying, in her most sympathising tone, "And you, my poor friend, what are you going to do?"

I answered as well as I could, that I must see first what could be done for my brother, and then think about myself.

"Martha," said she, "I know you are going to strip yourself of everything for this worthless and ungrateful man. It must not be so. Indeed it must not. You know there is no one who can help you now."

"I know it, Alice," I said, "perfectly well:" and I felt the hot blood rush for an instant into my face. I would not have accepted her assistance if she had offered it. Perhaps she guessed my feeling, for she drew me still more closely to her, and then said, in a softer, gentler tone—"Don't be offended, dear, I only want to keep you from expending everything upon him, and leaving yourself penniless."

"Alice," I said, "what I did before was for my own pleasure. What I shall do now will be from a sense of duty. God will help me."

I said this in so firm and decided a tone, that Alice, understanding how entirely my purpose was fixed, urged me no more; and after the exchange of a few words of affection, with a promise on my part that I would write almost immediately, we parted.

That long lonely night, and how it passed with me, I will not attempt to describe. In the morning my brother was true to his engagement, meeting me punctually at the place I had specified. I did not look at him. I rather felt that he was there. So that by what degree of respectability, or the contrary, his appearance was marked, I am not able to say. Not being likely to be recognised myself, I accommodated my own personal arrangements to his; and, indeed, the means which I had at my command were so small, in comparison with our probable necessities, that the expenses of travelling in any way were sufficiently formidable.

Old Jane had just received my letter when we reached her humble residence, and we found her in all the excitement

of anticipation, more perplexed about how to accommodate us than really pleased that we were going to share her home. No trifling matters of this kind, however, caused me the slightest anxiety or trouble. I should have been more than satisfied with a straw pallet within any walls that would shut my brother in from danger, and the world out from us both. In the way of personal indulgence I wanted nothing but a pillow for my head, whereon I might lay it down and weep my fill. This consolation I found on the first night spent in the poor woman's cottage, and I rose on the morrow better able than might have been anticipated, to look steadily into the prospect which lay before us.

My brother must leave his native country. There was no hope for him in remaining. I did not hold out any if he should go; but go he must. I never once permitted a doubt to be entertained upon that point. He might choose his destination: and, so far as my resources allowed of it, he should be provided with the means, even yet, of beginning life afresh.

We sometimes decide on the spur of the moment more wisely than when time is allowed us for arriving at a deliberate conclusion. I do not think we could have done better than to seek in our dire extremity the sheltering roof of my mother's devoted servant. For her sake she was kind to us, though greatly shocked at my brother's altered character and circumstances; and perhaps a little inclined to presume upon his fallen condition; but her habits and her station in life enabled her at this crisis to be of greater use to us than if she had moved in a more exalted sphere. She was secret too. It had been the pride of her life to keep sacred what was entrusted to her honour or dependent upon her care; and as much that we needed was the absolute work of a willing hand, old Jane was exactly the friend which our circumstances required. With our limited means it took a long time to repair my brother's wardrobe; but Jane and I both worked hard. I need not say how melancholy was the task to me, a second time, to labour for his outfit, and that with little more than the ruins of his former respectability to work upon.

All this time, or rather the early part of it, was spent by Martyn in a kind of moody idleness. There were moment-

when I half suspected that his intellects were impaired; but I believe all the sad changes which I observed in him might be accounted for by the life he had recently been leading, and to which I saw many times that he would have returned, but for the influence which happily I was able to exercise in restraining him.

I know not how I should have existed through this period of my life, except for the necessity of daily and hourly exertion—except for the support which is always to be derived from having a great duty to fulfil, and from applying ourselves to it with all our might. Sometimes, however, I was beset with momentary doubts as to whether it was a duty to spend so nearly all I had in the world upon so hopeless a venture. These were dark thoughts, and I dismissed them at last altogether. By degrees, too, my brother began to look more like his former self. I did for him all that a fond mother would, even to the cutting of his thick-matted hair; and then, when his bright clear look came back again, as it did sometimes for a moment, I kissed his hot brow, and we both wept together. Yet, though we wept, we gradually became less wretched. At last there grew between us something like the old feeling again; and then we rambled out together hand in hand along the shady hedgerows, sitting down sometimes upon the root of an old tree to watch the sun set—not talking much, we had not much to say, but thinking, as it were, into each other's hearts.

What should I have done at that time but for prayer? The very spectacle of my brother, as he stood before me, woke such agony, now more intense and difficult to bear, because it was again so mixed with tenderness. He was so noble a ruin. There was about him, at least there had been, something so genial. It was impossible to look at him and not see that he should have been the founder of a family and a name, the master of an honourable house, the husband of a loving wife, with children clinging to his knees. And here, he was the solitary bird in a great desert, driven forth from tribe, and kindred fellowship,—the solitary bird with broken wing and plumage soiled—a melancholy spectacle, most melancholy to me, who had shared with him the parent nest. What, indeed, would have become of me at this time had I not found consolation and support

in prayer ; for often, after wandering until we were weary, if we sate down upon a stone or tree, Martyn would fall upon the ground beside me, and hiding his face upon my lap, would weep with all the weakness of a child ; and then, when I had no words to offer, for I had said all the little I had to say so often, I used to look away from the sad earth up to the clear pure sky, pouring my very soul forth in that only language which is left to those for whom the world has no longer a place, a prospect, or a name.

Thus, though I never dared to hope for my poor brother, I went on preparing for his departure, an event which he seemed neither to wish for, nor to fear. I do not think he cared much now what became of him. I often wished he could be brought to care more ; but though he never once mentioned the name of Alice Fielding to me, I think he felt deeply the loss he had sustained in losing her ; and the great want of his nature, some one to care for him, appeared so to darken all which the future might otherwise have had to offer, that life itself had become a burden which he had scarcely energy enough to sustain.

Had I not felt confident that change of scene and circumstance, with the necessity of taking care of himself, would soon dispel this hopeless, cheerless kind of apathy, I should have thought there was more cruelty than kindness in sending him in this desponding state of mind away from his native shore. But then, on the other hand, what fate awaited him if he remained ? So I still maintained my resolution, pursued my purpose, and worked on. And when the time had come when all our plans were matured, when everything was arranged and completed, I could not let my brother go alone, but accompanied him to the seaport town from whence he was to sail. Here I saw him on board the vessel, made myself acquainted with his berth, and all its scanty comforts ; and after arranging for him everything I could think of as he would best like it to be, I took my last leave of him with tearless eyes, and went my way. I could not weep then, nor afterwards, until I had seen the great, heavy-laden vessel, with its hundred emigrants, sail slowly out towards the sea. Then I knew that my brother was really gone, and then I wept as I had never wept before.

CHAPTER XXII.

FROM the discharge of this last duty to my brother, I returned to the same humble home in which I had found so welcome a shelter in my hour of need; and the first object which attracted my attention on entering the house, was a letter addressed to me in a strange hand. I opened it with some interest, for I had now arrived at that crisis in my own affairs, which rendered the dawning of any light upon my future path, a matter of no small importance. Not that I expected any such light to be imparted by this letter, only my attention was quickened by the sight of it, and not the less so when I began to read its contents.

It was from Mr. Collingwood, the father of my late pupil, the little delicate boy, requesting me to go and reside with them; less, the writer said, in the capacity of governess, than as a companion and caretaker to the boy, whose mother, from ill health, was entirely unable to discharge that duty. He was to pursue his studies under the direction of masters; but his health, his spirits, and the formation of his habits and character required something more; and the boy himself was so strongly attached to me, the writer was pleased to say, that after consulting with Mr. and Mrs. Gardener, he and Mrs. Collingwood had decided upon making the proposition, not certainly the less agreeable to me for being accompanied by the offer of a very handsome salary, which I knew the Collingwoods could well afford.

Here, then, was a prospect opening to me, after my dark season of trial, of a nature, so far as I could judge of it, to cheer and strengthen my hopes. Here I should not only be useful, but beloved; for I knew the affections of the child had grown towards me in no common manner, and through him I might, perhaps, reach those of the parents. It was pleasant to me, also, to be at once placed in circumstances which enabled me to make ample and prompt remuneration to my poor hostess for all her kindness and her trouble; and thus having more than repaid her, as she said, and said truly, I gladly set out to seek my new home, which, how-

ever, I scarcely felt to be new in prospect, because of my long and intimate acquaintance with one of its inmates, and in some degree with the whole family through their near relatives.

But as this history is not intended for one of myself, I will pass over the detail of my kind welcome, and the sudden manner in which I found myself thoroughly at home with the Collingwoods in their handsome residence on the southern coast of England. Nor is it necessary to enlarge upon the seeming splendour to me of their mode of living, strongly contrasted as it was with the misery and degradation which I had so lately been called not only to witness, but to share. It is sufficient for all the remaining purposes of this story to state, that instead of being treated as an humble companion, I was immediately admitted to all the privileges of an old acquaintance—thanks to the good opinion of my little pupil; and on all occasions was treated by this family as a valued friend, rather than as a mere essential to their comfort.

Upon these terms I made frequent visits with them, and was in the same way introduced to all their company at home; so that my acquaintance with many agreeable families in the neighbourhood was formed upon equal, as well as cordial terms. I mention this more particularly, because it was my happiness in this manner to become acquainted with a family of the name of Langton, residing in the outskirts of the same large seaport town, near which the Collingwoods had selected one of the most handsome and commodious of the many mansions scattered along the coast.

My curiosity was first excited respecting the Langtons, by hearing them spoken of as an extremely agreeable, but *singular* family; and when I asked in what way singular, I was told that they mixed in the best society, and kept the most hospitable and handsome table, without ever allowing, or at all events inviting, their guests to take wine. "Of course," my informant added, "they have very little dinner company."

"And their evening parties?" I asked, for to one of these we were invited. "How are they conducted?"

I was told it was impossible to deny that the Langtons' evening parties were conducted with the best taste possible; and it was even granted to them, that in their quiet way

they received a good deal of company one way or another. At all events they were universally acknowledged to be liberal, large-hearted people; the first to suggest and the most energetic to carry out every plan which could be formed for the general good. "A more liberal man than Langton," my informant said, "did not exist; or a more enlightened man either as a scholar or a patron of art."

It is not necessary to say with what profound interest I listened to this account, given carelessly as it was, and even with some little tendency to throw a tone of disrespect over the whole description. I felt my face flush as I listened, while my heart beat with sensations at once deep and sad. Was it possible I should at last find that for which I had sought in public and pined in secret so long; and should I find my highest hopes all realised when it was too late—too late for *him*?

With this deep interest lying hidden beneath the observances of ordinary civility, I paid my first visit to the Langtons; and I found beneath their hospitable roof exactly what I would have given the world, had it been mine, to find before my poor brother's final fall. In a large evening party it was not possible for me to see realisable the beautiful exemplification of that system which they felt it a sacred duty to carry out, for they were a Christian family, as well as one in which the highest taste was cultivated. It was necessary to witness this in every-day life, in order to know all; and it was in this way that I first learned to love them. It was supposed by many who did not know them, that such habits as they thought it right to adopt, must necessarily render them cold and gloomy; but so far from this, I never knew a household throughout every department of which, there reigned a more universal spirit of cheerfulness and good-will. The mother was no less lovely in her sphere than the father was exemplary in his; and both, when they folded their fine happy children to their hearts, had the deep satisfaction of feeling, that one of the most fatal and destructive maladies ever brought by sin into the world, could never be introduced as a poisoned drop of pleasure to any who surrounded their happy and hospitable board.

As my acquaintance with this family became more intimate and familiar; and as I saw more of the beautiful working of that system which they sought to recommend

to others by the accompaniment of every lawful enjoyment, every embellishment of taste, as well as every Christian virtue; I could often have wept tears of anguish, which I knew I ought not to indulge, to think that the very being I had so loved and so tried to save, had never known the advantage of such companionship, and had been lost—humanly speaking, entirely from the want of it. And where was he then—the poor wanderer; while I was safely seated in the midst of all this pure and rational enjoyment? I was soon to learn where he was.

One evening in the midst of a large party at the Langtons, I happened to be seated in an obscure part of one of the rooms, where a gentleman was engaged in close conversation with Mr. Langton, and both so near me that I could distinctly hear what they said. As it related only to politics and public matters, I listened without thinking it necessary to change my place; when, suddenly, the gentleman taking a folded newspaper from his pocket, said, "By the way, have you heard of the loss of another emigrant ship—the Avon?—a total wreck, they say."

"The Avon?" said Mr. Langton, and I suppose they went on to talk about the wreck; but I heard no more. The Avon was the vessel in which poor Martyn had sailed. In vain I tried to listen. My senses would not serve me. I saw nothing—not those crowded rooms. I heard nothing, but the words—"a total wreck."

It was well for me that the rooms were crowded; for I could grasp the back of a chair which stood near me, and sometimes lean my dizzy head upon it, without being observed. At last the gentleman rose and went to another part of the room. I seized the moment, and laying my hand upon Mr. Langton's arm, without knowing what I did, said to him—"Is the Avon lost?"

I suppose he saw by my countenance what was the state of my feelings; and, taking it for granted that I had friends or relatives on board that vessel, he kindly placed my arm in his, and led me out of the room.

"You wish to know," asked Mr. Langton, "what is really the fate of this vessel?"

"I do," I answered.

"Will you wait," said he, "while I enquire for you; or will you go with me yourself?"

"Oh! let me go with you," I answered, and in a few seconds he had secured a carriage, in which we were driving rapidly along the streets. All that Mr. Langton said to me as we went was to tell me, that he had a brother whose engagements as a merchant brought him acquainted with all shipping intelligence; and as this was the evening for the posting of foreign letters, he expected we should find him still in his office. Indeed, if disengaged, he would have been sure to join the party, so that he had no doubt he would be there.

We now entered a gloomy street of dark warehouses, and other buildings of that description. When we alighted, Mr. Langton took my hand, and led me up a flight of stone steps, terminating in a well lighted office, where a gentleman stood at his desk, so intent upon the columns of a newspaper that he did not notice our approach. When he heard his brother's voice, he started, looked round, and then began to make way for us.

"Talbot," said Mr. Langton, "I have brought a lady with me; but we have come on a sad errand, and have no time for politeness. Tell us, is it true that the *Avon* is lost?"

"It is too true," said the brother. "I was just reading the account."

"And all on board?" asked Mr. Langton.

"All lost, I am afraid!" replied his brother. "There seems to have been great neglect—the vessel—" And he was going on, when I interrupted him, for I did not care to know *how*. "*All lost?*" I said.

He looked very kindly at me, and then spoke soothingly of something being not quite clearly ascertained. There was one boat, he said, that seemed to have got clear off, and if that boat could live in such sea—"If"—he was going on, but I could not bear it. "Oh! sir," I said, "you can surely get to know. My brother was quite a young man—tall—handsome." I burst into tears. I only needed to have given his name, and here I was expatiating, woman-like, upon his personal appearance.

Talbot Langton simply asked my brother's name; and then in the kindest manner, he promised to do anything he could to obtain for me a clear statement of every fact which might throw light upon his almost hopeless fate; and I left him with the strong impression that another friend was now

added to the list of those in which I was beginning to feel so rich.

Indeed when I thought over again the expression of this gentleman's benevolent and noble countenance, especially when I recalled the sympathising tones of his voice, there seemed something like the revival of a former acquaintance in this sudden and distressing interview. What could it be? That very night my thoughts went wandering back to a painful scene, the first in which I had ever seen my poor brother with the stamp of his fatal malady in living characters upon his brow. It was in a crowded room, where there was music and dancing, and where every one but me was gay and happy. A stranger had then come and placed himself betwixt me and the spectacle which it was horrible to me to look upon. A stranger had marked my suffering—a stranger had singled me out as the object of his generous kindness in that dark hour of need. Could it be possible that Talbot Langton was the same? That stranger was a married man, with a fair pale lady leaning on his arm; and the children of Mr. Langton, in their familiar and playful talk had always spoken of their uncle Talbot as alone; and as compelled, perhaps for that very reason, to spend all his evenings either with them, or in his dismal office, or at some public reading-rooms. They had even said they wished uncle Talbot had a wife, because it would be so nice to visit him at home.

All these thoughts came crowding back upon me in the wakeful hours of that long night; and it was perhaps well that they did so, otherwise the overwhelming horrors of that awful shipwreck would have been more than I could have borne to dwell upon alone.

To the hopeful spirit it seems ever, as we pass through life, that when the darkest cloud hangs over us there comes the brightest beam of sunshine, it may be glowing only fitfully and askance across the lurid scene, but yet we know it to be a beam from the great luminary whose light is not gone, but hidden.

It was thus with me through my experience. Even now, when this heavy blow had fallen, I became, in my new position, so surrounded and supported by the most generous of friends, as well as those most capable of assisting me, that I should have been ungrateful indeed, had I permitted feelings

of utter despondency to take possession of my soul. Over that one dark fact, that awful shipwreck, my thoughts still brooded; and nothing could divert them for the present. I was still not certain that my poor brother was amongst the lost. The awful mystery of his final doom was not revealed; nor could I, even in imagination, picture him as one who must pass suddenly into the presence of his Maker without warning, and without time for repentance. "God is so long-suffering and so merciful," I said to myself a thousand times; but in what way to suppose his mercy had been extended to this poor lost and fallen outcast from society I did not know.

Mr. Langton's brother had held out a hope to me that he should be able to obtain all particulars relating to the shipwreck in the course of a few weeks—it might possibly be in a shorter time than that; and he promised to let me know, without fail, the exact result of his inquiries. He happened, he said, to know a poor man, one of the emigrants, who had gone out in the ill-fated vessel; but it was more than he dared to hope, that this man was saved; or, even if he was, he might, amongst such numbers, know nothing of my brother. This person, he said, was a good Christian man—almost a missionary, in his zeal to do good. I learned afterwards that the zeal which inspired his efforts was not confined to his own spirit, but that Talbot Langton himself had long maintained this worthy man, employing him at his own expense in labouring amongst the most degraded and destitute of his fellow-beings. In this arduous work his health had lately given way; and, as he could not rest satisfied without labouring to the last, it had been agreed upon between him and his noble-hearted friend, that he should seek a more genial climate for the sphere of his future usefulness.

There was hope to me—bright, cheering hope in the very mention of this man. Humanly speaking, the probability was small that he should have formed any personal acquaintance with my brother: but who could tell? And even if he had not, there were his prayers. Who could tell whether some seed which he had scattered, even without especial aim, might not have fallen upon my poor brother's heart—that heart always so softened by misery, so appalled by danger, so shrinking and sensitive under every attack of
nal calamity.

No one can ever understand the preciousness of a faint hope, no one can ever appreciate the value of a poor drop of comfort, until they have been brought to the lowest condition of despair, either for themselves or others. Thus my brother's death, if I could only know that he had hope in his last moments, seemed to me scarcely a calamity, so dreadful was the fear that he had gone down into those devouring waters—perhaps asleep, perhaps stupified—perhaps without thought and feeling enough to enable him to pray. Then I pictured to myself the horror with which his poor shivering frame would be agitated: for, as I have said before, pain had always been such intense pain to him, that, often as these ideas pressed upon me in the night, I started from my pillow and paced the silent chamber, which, in the dead of night, seemed filled with the sound of rushing waters, the roar of raging elements, and the shrieks of the dying. And then I used to think of that good man, that blessed missionary with his holy zeal; but above all, I thought of Him who had inspired that zeal; and again repeating to myself "God is so good," I would fall upon my knees; and there, in silent prayer, I seldom failed to find at last that peace which, but for this spiritual communion with the Father of mercies, would have been impossible for me to attain, under circumstances of such intense and unavailing anxiety. It was, indeed, a season of instruction and of discipline to my own soul, which I now discovered that I had much needed. My business through life had been to act, and action was my element. Now I had to wait; and in this new school I had to learn, as well as to submit.

But the dark clouds of uncertainty were burst asunder at last. Mr. Langton requested that I would favour him with an interview; and if I felt equal to accompany him he would come for me himself, and convey me to his house. I knew what this announcement meant, that tidings had been received; but of what nature? This I had to learn, and I awaited the arrival of the carriage that was to come for me as best I could. It seemed an age before I heard the rattling of the wheels, though I knew my friends would lose no time. Mrs. Langton had kindly accompanied her husband, and they both took me almost into their arms, as I joined them in the carriage.

"I have only one question to ask," I said; "is my brother still living?"

"He lives," said Mr. Langton, "there is every reason to believe, at the time of his Redeemer: not here."

I knew not what else to expect, except that when I was out of the house, I saw Mr. Langton's brother standing in the library with a letter in his hand.

He said now, and he asked me kindly if he should read it then.

"Yes, now," I answered: "and all—please to read all."

I will not repeat here that simply worded letter. It was written by the good missionary, who, with some twenty or thirty of the passengers had escaped, almost as if by miracle. Mr. Langton it seems had attracted the attention of this good man from the first, and he had made many, but for some time, vain attempts to draw him into confidential conversation. From the wording of the letter I could easily understand how this was, for his language had much of what poor Martin in his early days would have called cant. It was in his language the good man had probably first learned the word: and it had consequently a beauty and a force which others would not perceive.

He even thought the writer stated, that the young man avoided him more than others did. So he spoke less to him, and prayed for him the more. This was his simple and humble comment upon what had probably been nothing short of contemptuous behaviour on the part of him for whom his petitions were offered up. But when the hour of peril came all things were changed. It was evident this holy man, supported by his trusting faith, and his habitual self-devotedness, had been enabled to serve his fellow-beings in every emergency, by a promptness and a practical usefulness which those who knew not the support of his strong consolations, were unable to command. Upon the evidences of mental agony which I knew my brother must have exhibited, the writer happily for me did not enlarge. He only told how a small company, my brother amongst the rest, were able to escape in one of the boats, without thinking when they did so, that, unprovided as they were with the necessary means of food and shelter, their sufferings might really be more agonising, and their fate almost as certain, as if they had remained with the vessel to the last.

In this destitute condition, however, the little party were enabled to exist for several nights and days upon the deep. My brother, amongst others, had received some serious injury while endeavouring to effect his escape; and now it was with nothing but the wide sea around them, and the blue sky over head, that he told into the attentive ear of his sympathising companion all the sad story of his sinful life; and he told it in such broken accents, and with such intervals of weeping and tenderness, that the kind offices of consolation became no less welcome than necessary.

The missionary had but one solace to offer, that which his Saviour had committed to him, as he believed, to administer wherever it fell within his power to the suffering children of earth. It was a solemn time; a solemn scene. No one in all the company dared hope with any confidence that they should ever reach an earthly shore; but in my brother's frame there were signs of approaching dissolution, which threatened not to wait the slow trials of life and strength to which the others might be exposed. Thus he became especially the charge of this devoted man, who held him in his arms, with his head pillowed on his shoulder, the better to hear the low sounds that passed through his parched lips, the better to answer them in such a way as that this earnest and solemn communion should not be known and heard by the company at large.

In this manner, pillowed upon the breast of this devoted man, my poor brother died; but he died in hope. The missionary said he had witnessed many deaths, but never one accompanied by such appealing tenderness, such utter self-abasement, such lowly penitence, and such an entire casting of every hope and every trust upon the dear Redeemer. There was no fear then, no dread of that deep sea; only sometimes a closer clinging of the poor weak arms when a fierce and angry wave came dashing up against the side of the boat. A few words there were of special and affectionate remembrance to a kind sister. He did not utter her name, nor had he ever told his own. The good man had not even thought of asking it; so that when they reached the nearest land, which they did on the following day, he sought anxiously about the body, for some letter or other sign by which he might learn who it was that had thus died like a child upon his bosom. It was in this way

he discovered the name of Bond upon a card, and he felt sure from the circumstances of his past life, which the dying man communicated, that he was the individual to whom Mr. Langton's inquiries referred.

The writer then went on to state particulars relating to the others who had escaped in the boat, all of whom were able to reach the shore, though many of them in so exhausted and feeble a condition, as to be entirely unable to assist in making the lowly grave where my brother was interred, and which the kind missionary described as being in a solitary place by the sea-shore, beyond the reach of the highest tide, and where no human foot was ever likely to tread.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THIS letter, so soon as I had made all its contents my own, so soon as I had become sufficiently composed to receive into my heart the clear impression of its deep truths, I sent to Alice Fielding, with a short account of how it had come into my possession.

If I had thought Alice at all harsh and disdainful in the last interview we had together, such feelings were amply atoned for now. The account of that solemn and awful scene did all the sweet work of mercy and forgiveness with her. She wrote to me at great length a letter worthy of herself. He, whom God had seen meet to pardon, she could not only pardon too, but love and honour in his death.

From this time Alice and I became more united than ever. We could again speak of my brother, but it was only seldom that we did so. When we did, it was as one among the ransomed hosts of heaven, and as such we no longer shrank as we once had done, from mentioning his frailties while on earth. Though so great a sinner in the sight of man, we knew that in the sight of God, others were equally stained with the infirmities of mortal clay; and what we had to do was to stretch out our hands, weak though they might be, to prevent others from falling into the same

snare. The harvest we had to reap was truly from seed which had been sown in tears, but might we not yet hope to bring home our sheaves rejoicing.

From this time Alice Fielding became more than ever devoted and earnest in her advocacy of that domestic and social system, which I beheld so beautifully exemplified in the family of the Langtons. Of the progress she made I am not prepared to speak, for she found opponents where opposition would least have been expected. Still there can be no doubt but her mild and gentle influence did much, especially amongst the young men just entering upon the most serious duties of Christian life, who often met at her father's hospitable table. Alice seemed to grow bolder too as she laboured in this cause. Her mind threw off many of its shackles and prejudices, and thus an energy was imparted to her looks and manner, which had been wanting in early life, and a tenderness to her sympathies which the weak and the erring had not always been able to obtain. The extent of the good she was thus able to do can never be calculated in this world. If she had first to suffer, it was never a cause of regret to her, for without suffering herself, she might have been wanting in pity for others. Thus, in her very efforts to serve her fellow-beings, her own character received its happiest impress; and the door which had been closed upon her earthly hopes, proved a blessed passport to a life enlivened by hopes of a more generous, a more ennobling, and a holier nature.

THE story written by the sister for her young friends extends no further, because they were so well acquainted with her and her history, from this time, that it was unnecessary for any details relating merely to herself to be included in this account of her brother's fortunes. Her own feelings, too, might justly operate against the disclosure of these few simple facts which yet remained to be laid before the reader.

It is perhaps scarcely necessary to say that the Langtons were that happy and benevolent family to whom the reader was first introduced, as enjoying their Christmas festivities

without the artificial aid of those stimulants almost universally found upon an English table; and that the sister of Martyn Bond was their honoured guest—the governess who found more than a home beneath their hospitable roof. None can wonder, after this story has been read, that the visitor should sometimes be detected by the children in the act of gazing intently upon the glowing embers of the winter's fire, while her thoughts, withdrawn from all surrounding and immediate things, went wandering back, far away into the past, revealing images of bygone things, and brooding over scenes and circumstances which bear no relation to that happy family, with their pure enjoyments and their unsoiled hearts.

Uncle Talbot, it may be remembered, was also a beloved and honoured member of the same happy circle; and Talbot Langton was the brother from whom all the information relating to that sad shipwreck was obtained. He it was who, in our early period of the sister's history, did her kind service on the occasion of one of her first great sorrows in relation to her brother. He was then a married man; but his wife, always a delicate and gentle creature, died early; and from that time he led in some degree the life of a recluse. His heart was warm, but he did not permit many to share its affections; his charities were abundant, but they were mostly secret, and sometimes peculiar. He wanted some female influence to soften and harmonise his character.

On his first intimate acquaintance with Miss Bond he became naturally interested by her deep and unobtrusive affections for her unworthy brother; and, when he heard the history of her past life, he became convinced that one who had so served and loved the lost, must be capable of loving still; and he consequently asked for the living what the dead could no longer claim.

Talbot Langton was no more a recluse. The establishment which he had now found a willing helpmate to conduct, was characterised by the most unbounded hospitality. The most genial kindness marked the whole of its domestic arrangements; and especially at that season of the year, when friend meets friend with more than usual pleasure—when old differences are adjusted, estrangements forgotten, and the differences of rank and station merged in one

general exhibition of good-will—especially at this season, their table, which was spread with plenty and adorned with taste, became the favourite resort of the large circle of friends who had gradually imbibed some of their peculiar views. One luxury alone was absent. It could have been no luxury to them; it was too deeply tinged with the traces of sorrow and regret.

THE END.

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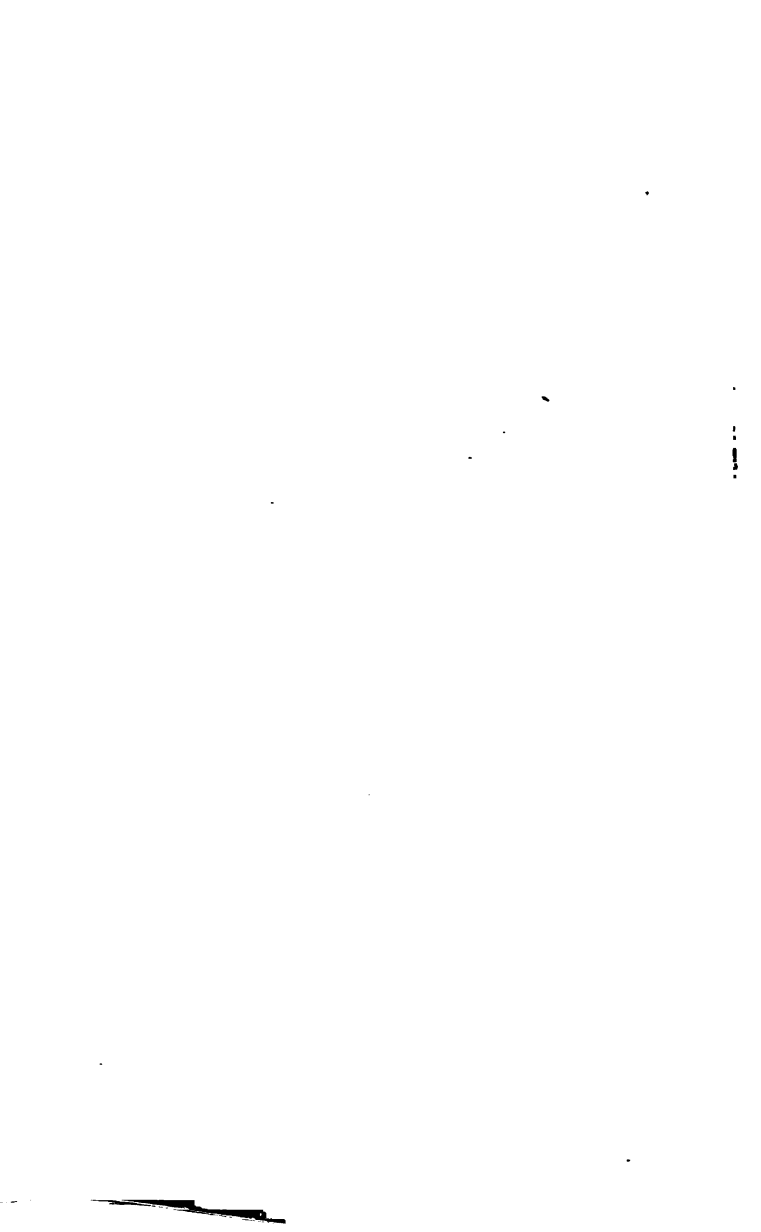
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